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Always a Grand

Duke

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Keystone Photo

THE GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER OF RUSSIA
1866-1933

Photographed in France shortly before his death

ALWAYS A GRAND DUKE

by

ALEXANDER
GRAND DUKE OF RUSSIA



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That man is blessed who was born
In dreaded years destroying levels,
The gods have asked him to their revels,
He is their equal until morn.

When the immortals put on trial
The human race, he sits with them
And drinks,—a god himself pro tem,—
Of immortality the vial.

—TUTCHEFF

FOREWORD

My publishers tell me that *Always a Grand Duke* is a good title. For all I know, it might be true. I personally wanted to call this book *The Recapture*. It sounds somewhat Proustian, but it becomes the contents. Just as *Once a Grand Duke* was the record of things lost and opportunities squandered, the present volume is a registry of values redeemed. The action takes place this time outside of Russia. The number of reigning sovereigns in the cast of characters is reduced from sixteen to ten, which leaves a blank fortunately filled by the American and Abyssinian potentates.

There is going to be no sequel. There never is to a life rescued in the nick of time. It just rolls on.

An acknowledgment is due to a young artist who lives in the house across the street from me and who was working all these months on the program of his first piano recital, consisting entirely of Bach. It helped me a great deal! I felt as though I were in New York.

ALEXANDER, GRAND DUKE OF RUSSIA.

Alpes Maritimes
January, 1933

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CHAPTER ONE

LAZARUS COMES FORTH

I

WE can suffer only so much, and then, just as we are about to dash our heads against the wall, something snaps inside of us and sends us meandering over a new and uncharted route, sailless but oblivion-bound at last.

This mysterious device for self-preservation started working in me on that pale-blue January afternoon of 1919 when, standing at the window of the Paris Express at the station of Taranto and trying to outyell the shrill accents of the Italian porters, I bade farewell to the officers of H.M.S. *Forsythe* that had taken me out of the furnace of revolution-swept Russia.

"Sorry not to be able to sail you straight into the palm-garden of the Ritz in Paris," said the Commander laughingly.

"So am I," I answered with apparent feeling but thought, "Heaven be praised for that . . ."

Appreciative as I was of their touching attention and great kindness, not for a single moment during the four days spent aboard their cruiser could I suppress that hor-

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rible sense of acute humiliation caused by the fact that a grandson of Emperor Nicholas I had to be rescued from Russians by Britishers. I did my utmost to chase away these bitter thoughts. I made frantic efforts to be gay and simulate an interest in their stories of the Battle of Jutland and of the four-year blockade of Germany, but a voice, a harsh, hissing, sarcastic voice never stopped whispering in my ears.

"You old fool, you inveterate dreamer!" it said over and over again. "You imagine that you have escaped from your past but here it is, glaring at you from every nook and corner. . . . You see these Britishers? They look smart, don't they? And theirs is a beautiful cruiser, isn't it? Well, how about those twenty-four years wasted by you in the Russian Navy? You used to fool yourself into the belief that you would be able to outbuild and outsmart the British, and here you are . . . A refugee accepting the hospitality of your royal British cousin, saved by his men from the furor of your own sailors, drinking the health of His Britannic Majesty while your own Emperor has been shot and your brothers are nightly awaiting their doom and your navy is lying at the bottom of the Black Sea! A great admiral you have proven to be. . . ."

During the meals I took in the company of the Commander I recurred to every conceivable ruse so as to keep my eyes from seeing the portrait of George V hanging on the wall just opposite my place at table. The similarity

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between the features of the British sovereign and those of the late Czar, striking at all times, was positively unbearable now, aboard the *Forsythe*. It set my mind on the track of haunting memories, it made me recall in minutest detail the words of Nicky, who often said jokingly that, were he to wear a cutaway and a "topper" and appear arm in arm with his cousin George in the royal enclosure at Epsom, he would be certain to cause a great number of bets among the racetrack crowds as to "which is which."

At night I lay awake in my cabin, my fists clenched and my eyes riveted to the porthole. It seemed to me there was little sense in prolonging the agony and that a brave jump overboard would put me out of my misery. There were children to be considered, of course, seven of them, but I feared that I had failed not only as an admiral and a statesman but as a father as well. If I had not hesitated to leave them behind, in Russia, was it not the best possible proof that I felt sure they could be taken care of and brought up without my assistance? I had no money left to give them and they had nothing to learn from me. Unlike their mother and grandmother, who continued to believe in the impeccability of the World of the Romanoffs, I knew that all our truths were lies and all our wisdom just one colossal conglomerate of vague illusions and stale platitudes. I could not teach my sons my official religion because it had gone bankrupt four years previous on the

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fields of the Marne and Tannenberg. I could not lecture them on the awesome subject of our "duties toward the State" because an outlaw has no duties toward a State that died the unlamented death of a homeless tramp. . . .

And there I was, a man of fifty-three, without money, occupation, country, home or even address, brooding over the past, dreading the thought of falling asleep lest I should dream of those who were gone, and postponing suicide from night to night just because of a somewhat old-fashioned scruple to cause "unpleasant notoriety" to the amiable Commander of H.M.S. *Forsythe*.

2

Our twenty-four-hour stay in Constantinople, instead of distracting me, as I had hoped, nearly drove me completely insane. I planned to spend the entire day in the soothing solitude of the Aya-Sophia Mosque, but a representative of the British Supreme Command who boarded the ship when we entered the Golden Horn brought me a message from Countess Brassova, the morganatic wife of my late brother-in-law Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich. Not having heard from her husband for the past eight months—he had been shot by the Bolsheviks in June, 1918—she refused to believe the Soviet reports concerning his death and thought I was bringing her a letter from her dear Misha.

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"Your Imperial Highness will find her," explained the Britisher, "at the Hotel Tokatlian in Therapia. When you get there, she wants you not to give your name to the room clerk but to remain on the veranda facing the sea, so she can see you from the windows of her suite."

"Why all this? It sounds like a page from a detective story. Whom is she afraid of?"

"The Bolsheviks," he said apologetically, obviously sorry for the poor Countess.

"The Bolsheviks? Here in Constantinople?"

"Well, Your Imperial Highness, the truth is that the Countess fears that the agents of the Soviets may attempt to kidnap her son and that, knowing your arrival is expected, they may use your name to gain entry."

I must admit I hated to go ashore. I knew in advance that I was going to meet another victim of that well-nigh incurable illness which I call "Bolshevikophobia" and which turns many an otherwise sensible person into a maniac who sees the "far-reaching hand of the Soviets" in everything that takes place under the sun. And besides, what could I possibly tell the hapless woman? I had no letter for her and it would have been too horrible on my part to try to destroy her dreams of meeting her husband again. For the past six months I had been exhausting my supply of logic and patience in talking to my wife, my sister-in-law and my mother-in-law who maintained with all the fervor of real devotion that their brother and son

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Nicky had been "rescued by the Almighty" from the hands of the Bolshevik executioners in Siberia. I needed not to talk to Brassova to predict that no evidence, no proof and no testimony of witnesses could outweigh blind faith and thirst for a miracle in the mind of a woman in love. Were I to insist that she should abandon her senseless waiting and turn her affection exclusively to her little son, she might have imagined that as a Romanoff I was still frowning on the marriage of a brother of the Czar to a twice divorced daughter of a Moscow lawyer.

"May I ask Your Imperial Highness, whether you will see Countess Brassova or not?" finally asked the Britisher, no doubt reading my thoughts.

I sighed and off we went to Therapia to play hide-and-seek with imaginary Bolsheviks.

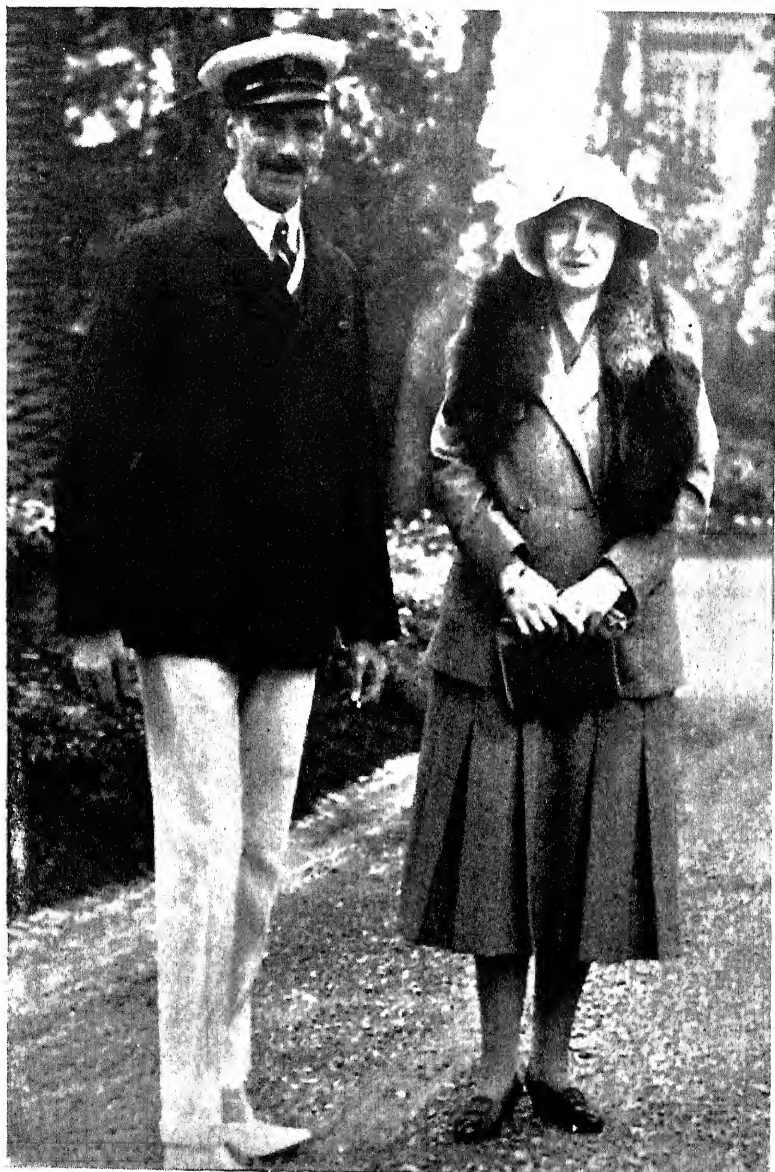
After a long delay—I was sitting on a veranda overlooking the Sea of Marmora and watching a Greek freighter going in the direction of Russia—I suddenly heard a faint tap on the glass. I turned and looked around. I was alone but the tapping continued. It sounded as though it were coming from somewhere above. I raised my head and saw a hand thrust between the tightly drawn curtains of a window on the second floor. Then the tapping ceased and the hand began to signal with all five wide-spread fingers. One . . . two . . . three . . . a pause, and a single finger. She must mean she is in apartment No. 16, I decided, and made for the lobby, fighting with my-



International News Photo

ONLY YESTERDAY

King George V and Queen Mary of England, the two "affectionate cousins" of Grand Duke Alexander, as they appeared at the brilliant masquerade ball in Devonshire House in 1897



International News Photo

THE KING AND QUEEN OF DENMARK

They, too, participated in the spring reunions in Copenhagen

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self to keep down the irritation caused by this clumsy attempt at secrecy.

At the door of apartment No. 16 I was met by a middle-aged woman who asked me to step into the salon and take a seat. To my great surprise, instead of announcing me to Brassova, she remained standing in the center of the floor and glaring straight into my face. At first I pretended not to notice her presence, but then I could not control myself any longer and shouted in a perfect rage:

"Listen you, whoever you may be . . . This thing has gone far enough. I won't stand it for another moment. After all, I am only human and I have nerves too. If you still doubt whether I am myself, go ahead and pull my beard to see if it is real but for God's sake stop this gruesome comedy!"

"Now I know it is really Grand Duke Alexander," exclaimed a familiar voice in the adjoining room and Brassova burst in, bubbling over with excitement and full of apologies for what she termed "necessary measures of precaution dictated by common sense."

Her manner and appearance startled me. Little if anything was left of that supremely cold, dictatorial, majestic woman who had swept my poor brother-in-law off his feet and made him exchange his title, position and estates for the life of an exile. She still kept that tall thin figure of an "uncrowned empress" and that capricious expression of a firm mouth which, coupled with a scar on the lower part

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of her face, had always created the effect of an odd and challenging fascination, but the ice of those domineering brownish eyes had melted away and a furrow, deep and sorrowful, was now running across the high forehead toward the parted waves of her chestnut hair touched with gray.

"I have so many questions to ask you," she commenced and stopped short, looking at my hands and apparently expecting to see a letter.

"I shall be delighted to answer all of them," I mumbled awkwardly, hoping against hope she would spare both of us this purposeless ordeal.

"When did you hear from Misha last?"

She came close to me and I could not dodge her eyes.

"Over a year ago," I said in a voice that was not my own.

"Couldn't he get in touch with you during all that time?"

"How could he? Don't you realize that he was imprisoned in the North, while the Dowager-Empress, Grand Duchess Olga, Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter, and myself with Xenia and the children were kept by the Soviets on our Crimean estates, in the far South."

"But didn't you people at least try to send a trusted officer up North to bring you some news from Misha?"

Send a "trusted officer" up North! A thing of that sort would have been certain to prove fatal to both Misha and

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ourselves. Nothing would have pleased the Soviets better than to be able to catch us attempting to communicate with the Czar or his brother.

"So you mean to say," she interrupted my laborious explanations, "that you are bringing me no news at all?"

"None at all, for the simple reason that I myself know nothing further than what was published in the Soviet newspapers."

"I am surprised at you!" she exclaimed in anger. "The very idea of your believing those liars! No Russian, not even a maddened peasant, could have ever raised his hand against the man who had voluntarily refused to become Czar! Everybody realizes how noble it was on the part of my husband to abdicate right after his brother had abdicated and to give freedom of choice to his people. Had Misha ever cared about crown or power, he would have never married me, in the first place."

She continued in this vein at great length, repeating over and over the story of Misha's abdication on March 15, 1917, when, ignoring the wishes of the Czar and the advice of the moderate leaders of the revolution, he left Russia leaderless and retired with his wife to what he dreamed would be one endless idyll of uninterrupted happiness.

My head ached. My ears rang. I nodded automatically, each time she would stop her pathetic speech waiting for my approval. Had I opened my mouth I would have

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screamed at her that it was not my fault that both her husband and his brother had mistaken the roar of a hysterical mob for the voice of the Almighty.

"You must have had a rough crossing," she finally remarked, noticing the state I was in.

"I had. In fact, I have not closed my eyes at all since the moment I left Russia."

"Well, in such a case I shan't keep you any longer. I suppose I shall see you very soon in London. Misha loves England and it will be great fun living there again."

I jumped up, grabbed my hat and ran. Considerations of politeness, eternal fear of hurting other people's feelings, sympathy for this half-maddened woman—nothing mattered any more. I craved to be alone. With the last ounce of strength left in my body I wanted to choke my past and everybody and everything that had any connection with it.

3

Back in my cabin I poured myself a large glass of brandy and swallowed it in one gulp. Then I fell on the bunk and began to pray. But the liquor failed to produce the desired effect, while the familiar words beaten into me during my years of infancy sounded utterly false, reminding me of those white-bearded bishops who used to bless the slaughter-bound regiments of youngsters with their miraculous icons.

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The balance of the voyage—it took us thirty-six hours more to reach the coast of Italy—is a blank in my memory.

7 I suppose I talked and moved about and complimented
6 my hosts on the beauty of their cruiser, but all that was
5 done in a stupor. Something else, besides antiquated
9 Slavonic prayers, three-starred brandy and clean-shaven
91 Britishers, was necessary to shake up my clogged brain
and make me forget the nightmares of the past. That
“something else” occurred at the station of Taranto, a few
moments before the Paris Express pulled out.

(2) A short, fat, middle-aged *lazzarone* stopped in front of
my window and began to sing in a frightful off-key voice
“O Sole Mio,” it being his warning to the passengers of
the express that the longer the delay in their contribution
to the Cause of Art the harsher their punishment would be.
6 “Things can’t be so bad in this part of the world,” I
7 said aloud in Italian though addressing mostly myself, “if
3 these people still warble ‘O Sole Mio.’”

A The singer flashed a radiant smile at me, stepped back a
few paces, took off his hat and bowed from the hips.

92 “The handsome *forestiere* is right, a thousand times
right,” he said dramatically. “Life is still beautiful in our
divine Italy. A flask of good wine, the *occhiata* of a pretty
girl, a few lire in one’s pocket—and may our merciful
Lord take care of the dead. . . .”

He stretched out a hand, gracefully caught the coin,
and that was all. The whistle blew, and the train started

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on its way past the white and red station buildings toward the orange groves and vineyards that lay in the green valleys, basking in the mellow rays of an Italian sunset.

The nature of the thing that happened to me at that moment—the whole metamorphosis occurred in less than a second—will never be explained. Perhaps it was nothing more than a healthy reaction. Perhaps I had reached a point beyond which no human can suffer and live. I know only that an unbelievable feeling of overwhelming happiness, coming from nowhere and maybe hideous under the circumstances, suddenly shot through my system with the force of an electric charge. "I am free at last!" I uttered these words before I had a chance to realize their full meaning. Then I felt like running through the train and finding someone to whom I could tell that my fifty years of grand-ducal enslavement, misery, terror and chaos were over, that I was now joining the world of men and women who live from day to day not giving a hang about the weighty problems of Empire.

Rushing through the door of the compartment I saw a pad of telegram blanks stuck in a rack, and this at once gave me an idea as to the way in which I could assert my newly acquired freedom. I decided to wire to all my relatives and friends in Rome that I would not be able to stop in their city on account of some "very important matters" demanding my immediate presence in Paris. I was afraid that even a few hours spent with our reigning Italian rela-

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tives would destroy my precious feeling of carefree happiness because the King no doubt would be extremely anxious to learn the details of Nicky's end while the Queen would bombard me with questions about the conditions in which I left her sisters Stana and Militza, the wives of my cousins Nicholas and Peter.

"Be firm!" I said to myself as I scribbled a few hasty lines. "You are through with your past and you do not care to become a professional carrier of imperial hard-luck stories. No more palace luncheons for you. From now on you'll eat in public restaurants, when and if you eat at all."

My telegrams written and dispatched, I made for the dining car, whistling a five-year-old French song and brazenly eyeing the astonished passengers who obviously thought that that poor Russian Grand Duke must have finally lost whatever was left of his mind.

I have yet to meet a *maître d'hôtel* who has not worked as a busboy at the Ritz in Paris, at one time or another, so I was not surprised when the chief steward of the Paris Express made a thirty-foot dash for me with the expression of a man who has found his long-lost brother.

"I thought that Monseigneur would dine in his compartment. I have prepared a special French menu which includes—"

"I don't care what it includes," I cut his staccato French short, "I'll have some spaghetti and right here!"

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"That's the spirit!" commented a husky American voice on my right. "We sailors should never fall for French menus."

I turned and recognized a well-known American admiral whom I had first met many years ago during my stay in the Orient. Next moment we were shouting at each other in a manner that might have suggested an approaching fisticuff to anyone not understanding English. Memories of the long-forgotten windjammers, nights in the American Concession in Shanghai, our bitter rivalry for the heart of the same golden-haired girl in Hongkong, mutual friends in San Francisco, Washington and Newport, the relative merits of the harbors of Vancouver and Sydney—everything and everybody were reviewed between loud bursts of continuous laughter and with the aid of two quarts of Chianti.

Weather-beaten men have a peculiar tact of their own. Neither during the dinner nor afterwards in my compartment did this two-fisted sailor show an inkling of his understanding of the tragic circumstances underlying my hysterical gayety. The unerring instinct of a rugged navigator told him that he was confronted with a shipwrecked craft and that no mention of the five fatal years that intervened between my last season in Newport and the present moment should be permitted to enter our conversation. Meeting him aboard this train and talking to him of the thousand and one things that could not have presented

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the slightest interest to anyone but the two of us amounted to a miraculous chance to pick up the thread of life where I had dropped it away back in my earlier days.

I wished we could have stayed together as far as Paris but he had to get off in Rome. As we were shaking hands and promising to see each other next week in Paris, he touched my coat-pocket and put something heavy in there.

"What is it?" I asked, slightly taken aback by this gesture.

"Oh, it's nothing," he replied, turning to go. "Just a little trick that you may need some day. I hear there are lots of those war-crazed fellows crawling in the streets of Paris."

And he left before I could even ascertain the nature of the "little trick." It was a gun. A .45 Colt. A manly gift from a manly admiral.

4

For the first time in my life I was arriving in Paris unheralded and unexpected. No bemonocled representatives of the Russian Imperial Embassy awaited me on the platform of the Gare de Lyon and no gold-braided delegates of the Presidency of the French Republic rushed forth to escort me through the "special exit."

"Taxi or subway?" asked the blue-shirted porter and the ceremony of official reception was over.

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To be certain, fighting the dense noon traffic in a jumpy antediluvian cab was not nearly as spectacular as dashing down the Rue de Rivoli in a platinum-hooded Delauney-Belleville under a heavy guard of motorcycle police, but the thrill of having safely reached my goal made these petty inconveniences appear exhilarating and attractive. I was back among people who retained their ability to smile—and that was all I cared about!

With eyes closed I could have known that I was driving through the streets of Paris, for not unlike all other capitals of the world it can always be recognized by its specific smell: raw leather in Berlin, fish-and-cheese in London, burned gasoline in New York, freshly baked bread in Paris. . . . No expensive perfume could have smelled better. Looking right and left for traces of the war, I discovered no signs of recent calamities, no changes, nothing unusual. Quite a few khaki-clad Americans and Britishers loafed on the open terraces of the cafés, but otherwise it was the same all-forgetting Paris, with its taxi-drivers cursing each other elaborately and eloquently, with its lackadaisical policemen half-asleep on their beats, with its ruddy elderly gentlemen following the legs of the fast-walking midinettes with a languorous look.

Another turn into a street crowded with cars, and my gray-haired driver brought his rickety ark to a sharp halt.

“What is the matter?” I exclaimed absent-mindedly.

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"Nothing is the matter," he answered grumpily, "but didn't you say the Ritz?"

The Ritz! To think that but five days ago I was still sitting in that same house of mine in the Crimea where for a period of over thirteen months I had expected to be seized and shot almost every moment.

"Are you getting off here?" insisted the driver.

"You can bet your life on it!" I said with considerable feeling and jumping out of the cab with the alacrity of one pursued by the furies bumped headlong into a smartly dressed woman who was standing on the curb, apparently awaiting the arrival of her car.

"Where are your eyes?" she hissed contemptuously.

"So much beauty has blinded me, my dear Marthe," I admitted meekly, recognizing the familiar features of my old friend Mme. Marthe Letellier, one of the reigning beauties of Paris.

She looked at me sharply and turned deadly pale. She would have fainted right on the sidewalk had I not grasped her in my arms.

"Some water, quick!" I said to the bewildered porter. "What is it, Marthe? Are you not feeling well? Have you been ill recently?"

She pushed me aside and said firmly:

"It's a hoax. I know it's a hoax. You have the voice and the face of Grand Duke Alexander but you couldn't be he, you just couldn't be!"

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"Why, my dear Marthe . . ."

"You are an impostor!" she continued angrily. "But you are playing a very dangerous game because everybody in Paris knows that Grand Duke Alexander was shot by the Bolsheviks several months ago. Why, I myself had a mass said for him in the Church of the Madeleine . . ."

She spoke loudly and excitedly, and several passers-by stopped, attracted by this strange dialogue. The situation was becoming decidedly embarrassing. If I could not prove my identity to this friend of many years, what chance did I stand with strangers?

"Would a diplomatic passport issued by the Allied Command in the Crimea do, Marthe?" I asked laughingly, though in truth distinctly alarmed.

"Yes, but I don't believe you have one."

"Shall we continue this conversation in the lobby?"

"All right, but I warn you once more, I don't believe you. You are an impostor."

We settled down in two chairs near the reception desk, and my beautiful friend began a careful perusal of my papers: the diplomatic passport, the visa issued to me by the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, several letters addressed to me by my relatives in London, etc.

When she finished, she burst into tears and we had to have some more water.

"I can never apologize enough for my rudeness," she

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cried into her tiny laced handkerchief, "but you must understand how odd it is to meet someone you believed surely dead."

"Was it a nice mass you had said for me, Marthe?"

"Oh, perfectly gorgeous. I had that beautiful Russian choir singing your favorite airs. And all your friends were present . . . every one of them . . . and then we talked about you the whole evening. . . . I suppose you think it ridiculous?"

"Not at all, Marthe," I reassured her tenderly, "to the contrary, I must tell you frankly, I feel highly flattered by so much attention. But tell me, Marthe, what particular airs did the choir sing?"

She raised her tear-stained eyes, and then we both shrieked with laughter. I naturally wanted to learn the exact date of my assassination, and from what she told me I gathered that, not knowing that I had been saved in the Crimea by the German troops in the spring of last year, my Parisian friends decided that I had shared the fate of my brother-in-law. The names "Michael Alexandrovich" and "Alexander Michailovich" sounding somewhat similar to the French ear, the local papers had interpreted the Soviet report relating to the murder of the former as a confirmation of my own demise.

"Wherever the mistake might have lain, the prayers of this establishment have been answered," piously concluded the genial manager of the Ritz who joined our lively con-

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ference in the lobby, and I went upstairs feeling like a modern edition of Lazarus of Bethany.

5

The hotel was packed with all sorts of Allied plenipotentiaries and experts who had come to attend the Versailles Conference and save mankind, accompanied by their wives, children, secretaries and friends. I had to be satisfied with whatever was found for me, a cubbyhole so situated as to permit its occupant to keep track of the number of corks popping in the restaurant downstairs.

Two equally efficient bands—American and native—played in shifts throughout the night, and long before dawn, without leaving my bed, I learned by heart every new song dealing with the kind-hearted mother who lay dying in a shabby room in the lower New York East Side while her prodigal boy was working as an entertainer in a terribly, terribly wicked night club in Chicago. This overemphasis of the “mother theme” in modern music surprised me: before the war we, all of us, used to take the fact of our mothers’ existence for granted.

Not that I had any particular grudge against the saccharine sentimentalism of the American composers, but the oftener that word “mother” echoed through the corridors of the Ritz, the clearer it became to me that I would not dare to dodge the mission entrusted to me by my

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mother-in-law. She made me swear that I would go at once to London and transmit to her sister, the Dowager-Queen Alexandra, the lengthy report of our experiences in the Crimea. I managed to escape a similar ordeal in Rome, thus disobeying the wishes of my cousins' wives, but it would have been too beastly cruel to break the heart of a woman in her middle seventies who had lost all she possessed in this world with the exception of her passionate love for her sister.

So London it had to be, for at least three days, allowing one day for a visit with Queen Alexandra, dedicating the second to my brother Michael Michailovich—who had lived in England since 1893 having been exiled from Russia in his early youth for marrying a commoner—and reserving an extra day for a none-too-pleasant reunion with those friendly British prophets who had always told me that we, the Romanoffs, were bound to come to an ignominious end.

First of all, however, I had to think of my wardrobe. I could not go to England in my khaki blouse and I had brought no civilian clothes with me because I had none in Russia. In former years it was my habit to keep them in Paris, in my apartment in the Rue Anatole de la Forge. Shortly after the outbreak of the war I had told my secretary to advise my French landlord that I was obliged to give up the apartment and that I would appreciate his taking care of my personal things, furniture and several

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trunks containing my valuable numismatic collection until a moment when it would be possible to have the whole shipped to Russia. The latter opportunity failed to materialize but I had no reasons to question the honesty and the goodwill of my landlord. The fact that I had paid the rent promptly and accurately for a period of fourteen years—although I had never occupied my apartment for more than two weeks each year—gave me the right to count on his friendly coöperation. A disappointment, the first cruel disappointment in my New Life, was awaiting me in the Rue Anatole de la Forge.

"The name of God be praised!" shrieked my chubby little landlord as I walked into his mahogany finished office. "What a treat for sore eyes! The good days are returning to our beautiful France! Jeanne, Jeanne, come quickly and see who is here."

Jeanne, his better and heavier half, rushed in breathlessly. For a while we vied with each other in exclamations, superlatives and yells of delight. Then—business is business—he suggested that now that I was back I might become his "most distinguished tenant" again. I said I would be delighted to share the roof with such altogether fascinating people but that I feared my present strained finances would prevent me from resuming that position of distinction.

He waved his hand deprecatingly:

"His Imperial Highness is joking. Victorious France will

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see to it that her Noble Friends return into the possession of their very vast personal fortunes."

He pronounced that word "vast" in tones of awe and admiration.

"Let us hope you are right," I said quietly, "but in the meanwhile I better keep on the safe side and not assume too heavy obligations."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" he said warmly. "His Imperial Highness need not worry about that. If the worst comes to the worst, his numismatic collection alone is worth a great deal of money."

The last remark alarmed me. It meant that my trunks had been opened and their contents appraised by some expert.

"I am glad you brought up that subject," I remarked in a manner as casual as possible. "I am about to leave for London and I think I would like to have you send my trunks to the Ritz. I shall decide upon my return as to what should be done with the furniture. Possibly I may, after all, take a chance at renting my old apartment."

A pause ensued, filled by a significant exchange of glances between the landlord and his wife. The latter suddenly remembered that she had to do a bit of shopping downtown. She hoped to see me again very soon. So did I.

"Monseigneur may recall," began the landlord when we were left alone, "that I received my last check from Russia on January first, nineteen-fourteen."

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"That's correct. Covering, I presume, the rental until December thirty-first, nineteen-fifteen."

"Exactly!" He seemed overjoyed by my memory. "In other words, now that Monseigneur is here, having escaped the bullets of savage assassins, may I have the honor of presenting the bill covering the three years from January first, nineteen-fifteen, until December thirty-first, nineteen-eighteen?"

I could hardly believe my ears.

"But you surely must have received a letter from my secretary written by him in the early fall of nineteen-fourteen and advising you that I would not be able to renew the lease."

"I have never received any such letter!" His smile disappeared and his accents became harsh. "I suppose Monseigneur has kept a copy?"

"You are joking. You do not think that having left my country in the way I did I was able to carry with me any correspondence at all, let alone copies of my secretary's letters?"

He sighed:

"How very regrettable. Had Monseigneur been able to produce that copy I would have been only too glad to overlook the fact that I never received his secretary's letter!"

"But now?"

"Now I must insist on getting this bill settled in full."

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There was no sense in continuing this conversation. I was beaten and I knew it. The law was on his side.

"All right," I said, getting up, "I shall settle your bill on my return from London. Will you send my trunks to the Ritz before noon?"

He got up too.

"I shall be delighted to send your trunks to the Ritz right away provided the manager of the hotel is instructed to settle this bill."

"But don't you realize that in order to pay your outrageous bill I must first raise some money and I cannot raise any until I get back my numismatic collection."

"I regret," he said dryly, "but I cannot entertain His Imperial Highness' proposition."

I went out in a haze. What was I to do? It all depended now on the amount of francs I would be able to get in exchange for my German marks and Austrian crowns because, having arrived from a part of Russia recently occupied by the Central Powers, I had brought no other money with me. "124,580 francs" read the total of the landlord's bill (so thorough was he in his unabashed rapacity that he even added interest for three years at six per cent), and I doubted whether my bunch of blue and yellow paper would fetch that many francs. I dared not stop at a bank from fear of learning the awful truth too soon and I decided to put my fate and my German marks

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and Austrian crowns into the hands of the manager of the Ritz.

Walking slowly down the Champs-Élysées, past the crowded cafés and gayly bedecked buildings, I was thinking of my own stupidity and my heart was choking with bitterness. Whose fault was it that, having handled during my lifetime millions of dollars, pounds and francs, I should be caught practically empty-handed now when I needed money more than ever before? How many times had I been warned by my friends in London and New York! How many times, both before and during the war, did they tell me that I should keep at least a quarter of my fortune somewhere outside of Russia, preferably outside of Europe! The clear, sharp eyes and firm chin of one of them—a famous American industrialist—flashed through my mind. In the course of our last meeting in St. Petersburg in 1915, when I helped expedite the affairs of his concern in Russia, he had asked me point-blank: "Have you got any money outside of Russia?" "How could I?" I answered. "If the news of it reached the public it might create a panic in the market." "Market be d—d!" he shouted angrily. "Why don't you think of your children? Remember, a day may come when you will regret your patriotic scruples!" He spent several hours with me that day begging me to let him invest at least a few hundred thousand dollars in America for me, but I turned down his offer. "I stand and fall with Russia," I said dramati-

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cally. What a fool I was! The Russia I talked of did fall but I was still "standing" . . . standing in the center of the Avenue des Champs-Élysées in Paris and racking my brain as to where to raise enough money to pay my landlord's bill. . . .

CHAPTER TWO

THE RITZ SAGA

I

"THE larger the size of the banknotes, the smaller their actual value," remarked the manager of the Ritz sententiously, spreading my thick bunches of water-colored and be-eagled bills all over his massive desk.

I nodded understandingly. The Russian five-hundred-rouble bills, about the "biggest thing" ever turned out by any treasury, would have fetched at this moment even less than these glamorous blue and yellow reminders of Kaiserdom and the Holy Roman Empire could.

He took a pencil, sharpened it methodically and began to jot down rows upon rows of menacing figures. I watched his calculations, silent and breathless. The Central European moneys not being as yet officially quoted on the Paris Stock Exchange, he had to fight his way out of the jungle of marks and crowns via the pound and the dollar. This took time and required considerable telephoning.

At the end of what seemed to me hours the experts came to the conclusion that I was entitled to one hundred fifty thousand francs for my fine assortment of "spread" and

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"half-spread" eagles. More than enough to pay the landlord's bill and cover the cost of my voyage to England.

"It's a shame," sighed the manager, "a horrible shame! To think that but five short years ago you would have got at least a couple of millions. I would advise you to reject this ridiculous offer and wait till Europe recovers its senses, even if it takes several months."

"It will take several months," I said cheerfully, "probably a little longer. That is why I shall accept the offer of your bankers. I would much rather wait for the day when Europe recovers its senses in London where I can dispose of my numismatic collection. Is there an eight o'clock train leaving from the Gare du Nord?"

"Yes, of course. But are your papers in order?"

"What do you mean, papers?"

"Your passport, your British visa."

"Do I need one?"

The manager smiled:

"You will discover by and by that it is a different world from the one you knew in nineteen-fourteen. I think you had better go to the British Passport Bureau at once if you expect to leave tonight. Better still, let me have your passport and our porter shall attend to the rest."

"No, thanks," I said, remembering that I wanted to see Lord Derby anyway. "I shall go straight to the British Ambassador. He happens to be an old friend of mine."

On my way to the British Embassy—just a few minutes'

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walk from the Ritz—I prepared my speech for Lord Derby's benefit. I decided to talk to him plainly and frankly because a man of his influence in the councils of the Conservative Party appeared particularly fitted to advise me as to whom I should see while in London. I knew him quite well. Before the war we used to meet in various clubs, both in England and on the Continent. During the war we were in a constant exchange of messages when in his capacity of Secretary of War he was providing me with airplanes and flying instructors. He knew of the many sacrifices made by the Russian Army in 1914-1916 and I did not doubt that he would be only too glad to help me open his Government's eyes on the real portent of the Bolshevik danger.

I was not disappointed. I found him eager and anxious to listen to a viva-voce report of what had happened to that much-becried Russian "steam-roller." He agreed with me whole-heartedly that the members of Lloyd George's coalition cabinet should right away be given first-hand information on the conditions in Russia, in any event before they put their feet under the oblong table in the Versailles Palace.

"But the trouble is," said Lord Derby, "that there are as many opinions about the correct thing to do in Russia as there are Russians arriving in London. I personally believe every word you say, but who is going to persuade my chiefs? Is there anyone among your people who possesses

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sufficient authority to make his voice audible in Downing Street and who at the same time could not be accused of extreme political bias?"

This was to the point. I readily admitted that his chiefs would be justified in questioning the statements of a Romanoff.

"Fortunately," I explained, "I have no intention of trying to influence their judgment. All I care about is to provide them with authentic data which they could very easily verify."

"Authentic data!" he repeated sadly. "Is there such a thing as authentic data about Russia? And besides, you are here in Paris while all the explaining will have to be done in London."

"But I am leaving for London tonight."

"Are you?"

"Certainly. I promised my mother-in-law that I would go and see the Dowager-Queen at once."

All of a sudden he became pensive. The famous jovial "Derby smile," so well known to the multitudes of British racetrack fans, abruptly left his ruddy face, giving way to a frown of undisguised concern.

"My prospective voyage to England seems to disconcert you," I said laughingly, though wondering at the same time what the matter could possibly be.

"Much worse than that," he answered, lowering his eyes, "it makes me feel downright unhappy!"

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"Are you joking?"

"I wish I were!" he exclaimed dejectedly. "I hoped to God I would be spared the necessity of going through this explanation but I suppose there is no other way. You must know the truth. This morning I received a telegram from the Foreign Office instructing me not to grant you a visa for the United Kingdom!"

"But, Lord Derby—"

I stopped short. It was as though someone had suddenly told me that my name was not Alexander. I did not know what I could or should say. For no reason at all I took out my passport and put it on the table.

"There surely must be a misunderstanding somewhere," I muttered incoherently, still hoping the smile would return to Lord Derby's face and that he would confess that he was merely playing an innocent joke on me.

"None whatsoever," he groaned in turn and picked up a telegram that lay on the top of a file in front of him. "Here it is. Black on white! No reasons given. No loopholes left. Just orders. I do not mind telling you that this is the most painful duty I was ever called upon to perform since the very first day I entered the service."

"But, Lord Derby, how could you refuse the right to enter England to a man who is not only closely related to His Majesty the King but who has fought as well, has fought for nearly three years, for the common cause of

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the Allies? Understand me clearly: I have no desire to force myself upon the hospitality of your country but I do believe that I am entitled at least to the courtesy of an explanation. What have I done to be blackballed by your Foreign Office? Since when has my presence in London become a menace to the interests of the British Commonwealth? And why, in the name of all the saints, did your Government bother to send a battle cruiser and rescue me from Russia if I am considered not fit even to land in England? The whole thing is hopelessly absurd!"

"It is," grimly confirmed Lord Derby, "more absurd than anything I have encountered so far in this office. You must understand, however, that an ambassador of His Britannic Majesty is not allowed to divulge the reasons guiding the decisions of the Foreign Office. As a gentleman to a gentleman, I would suggest you read the English newspapers."

"The English newspapers?" Now I felt completely puzzled. "What have they to say about my trip to London? Why should they be opposed to me?"

"They are not. As a matter of fact, they are writing nowadays of nothing except the growing unrest in England. The rising wave of Communism . . . the organization of Councils of Action by the workers . . . and all that sort of stuff. All of this makes the Foreign Office think that the arrival in London at this particular moment of a member of the Imperial Russian Family would be

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liable to cause a whole lot of unhealthy agitation and malicious rumors."

"And what about the venerable British doctrine of a safe refuge for any and all political exiles? What happened to that priceless possession of proud Albion?"

He shrugged his massive shoulders and silently pointed toward the telegram on his desk. Orders! The orders of the Foreign Office had taken the place of that classical doctrine! The country that in the past had extended the most liberal hospitality to all shades of anarchists and regicides now felt in duty bound to slam its doors in the face of His Britannic Majesty's cousin.

"This is, I suppose," I said, extending my hand, "my farewell to the British Isles."

"Not necessarily. In a month or two things might brighten up and the Foreign Office might reconsider its present decision."

"Even so," I concluded resignedly. "I think I shall remain right where I am."

"Well," remarked Lord Derby, "France is a beautiful country, isn't it?"

"A most attractive one, sir."

I wished I could tell him the story of the battle in the Rue Anatole de la Forge, because in the light of these new and truly startling developments the petty villainy of my little chubby landlord appeared quite pardonable, almost gentlemanly.

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2

To say to Lord Derby in tones of simulated indifference "I think I shall remain right where I am" presented no particular difficulty. Just a smile and a wave of the hand. It proved infinitely more troublesome to bring myself to the realization of the fact that I was actually forbidden to enter England—a kingdom ruled by my cousin, a country where I had spent every summer for over twenty years, a land whose cause I had championed against Russian diplomats and German soldiers, the island that worshiped the names of all those sovereigns who had played such a part in my personal life. . . . I thought of old Queen Victoria, visualizing her as I saw her for the last time, sitting in an oversized armchair in the Hotel Cimiez in Nice and talking in that brisk concise fashion of hers of the overwhelming tasks facing the future generations of Windsors and Romanoffs. I thought of our former traditional spring family reunions in Copenhagen where the Dowager-Queen Alexandra, then still the Princess of Wales, invariably greeted us aboard her yacht, surrounded by her children and extremely anxious to learn whether her son George had finally outgrown her nephew Nicky. I thought of the booming voice and the shaking shoulders of Uncle Bertie, King Edward VII, and of the forceful way in which he used to orate on the subject of the "mutual

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advantages" to be derived by us from a Russo-British Alliance.

And then I thought of the exiled Kaiser! I could not help thinking of him because, although stretched on my bed in the Ritz Hotel in Paris, I could hear that derisive, throaty, slightly hysterical laughter with which the news of my disgrace would be certain to be welcomed in the Castle of Doorn. His Russian cousins! Those poor nitwits who had imagined they could outsmart the greatest of the Hohenzollerns and whose blind adoration for England wound up in a refusal of a visa to spend even three short days in London! Didn't he tell them so? Didn't he constantly try to impress on the "fatheads" that they should cherish his friendship because no good could possibly come of their idiotic flirtation with "London grocers" and "Devonshire milkmen"?

Bitter and chaotic as were these galloping thoughts, they helped me reach one sensible decision. I realized that I should keep my interview with Lord Derby secret from the Dowager-Queen. She was obviously powerless to interfere with the decisions of the Foreign Office, so why break the old lady's heart? The first thing she would try to do would be to summon her son, while he in turn would have to inform her that there are times when even a King of England cannot smuggle a Russian Grand Duke into London. I sat down and wrote two letters, one to the Crimea to my mother-in-law telling her the truth, another to

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London, to Her Majesty, describing in detail the situation of her surviving Russian relatives and begging to be forgiven for not coming to England. "The Versailles Conference is about to open and I am very anxious, my dear aunt, not to miss an opportunity of talking to the Allied statesmen." This alibi sounded sufficiently plausible to impress a venerable gray-haired woman who was naturally still thinking of me in terms of my pre-débâcle grandeur. For one thing, no other nephew of hers had ever had his trunks seized for non-payment of rent.

3

For the next two months I led what in the parlance of the police reporters could be described as a "double existence." I say "for two months" because that's exactly how long my money lasted.

Upstairs in my cubbyhole, I brooded and wrote letters, letters to statesmen about the "situation of Russia," letters to relatives about the cost of living in Paris, letters to friends on How It Feels To Be Poor.

Downstairs, in the restaurant, I walked with head up, chest out, smiling, joking and generally participating in that fascinating "Armistice Game" which consisted in pretending that nothing at all had happened between August 1, 1914, and November 11, 1918, and that life was going on as usual.

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Head waiters were rushing to and fro, guiding the olive-skinned Indian rajahs and heavily bejeweled women to the "very best table in the Ritz."

Tall blond clear-eyed American girls trotted with their polo-pony gait and laughed contagiously over their Martinis.

Flat-chested, narrow-hipped young men of doubtful nationality came in droves to enjoy the music of the celebrated orchestra and admire the diamonds of the sturdy Spanish dowagers.

"Second violins" of the Versailles Conference spent hours over the luncheon table, overawing the bewildered busboys and explaining in both speech and pantomime how that Welsh Magician Lloyd George was going to twist Clemenceau around his little finger.

Uniforms ranged from the subdued khaki of the British to the fantastic plumes and feathers on the enormous hats of the unsung heroes of Portugal, and nowhere on earth, with the exception of a circus parade, could one have observed such a hodge-podge of medals as those bestowed upon their wearers by the victorious governments of Montenegro and San Marino.

All of this shrieked, drank, sang off-key and tried to forget. One had to accept it without reservations or walk out in disgust. I accepted it and did everything prescribed by the scenario. Sighed over the good old days with the head waiter who knew I could not tip him any more.

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Distributed autographs to the sweet elderly ladies who dropped in at the Ritz because they were told it was full of vice. Talked to the visiting American journalists who had written their stories about me several days before meeting me. And listened to the crazy theories as to how the Bolsheviks could be exterminated, advanced by miscellaneous persons whose friends were late in keeping their appointments.

Almost every minute I bumped into this or that one of my former Parisian acquaintances, and invitations to cocktail parties and dinners followed in rapid succession. The passing of five years had deprived our relations of any meaning whatsoever but it apparently sounded nice to be able to say next morning: "And then we had with us that poor Russian Grand Duke. My dear, it's simply thrilling! The man has lost every one of his brothers and cousins!"

In truth, up to that time—the middle of January, 1919—I did not know myself whether I had or had not lost "every one" of my brothers and cousins. Since the previous spring I had had no news about my brothers Nicholas and George, who were imprisoned in St. Petersburg, and I was still hoping that my youngest brother Sergei might have escaped death in Siberia. Several other members of our formerly numerous clan seemed to have disappeared altogether, and the revolution had taught me that the absence of news invariably means bad news.

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One morning—it must have been my third week in Paris—while sitting in the palm garden I noticed a young British officer whose face looked more than familiar. I watched him for several minutes, searching my mind for names, and then realized with a start that it was none other than Grand Duke Dimitry, the son of my cousin Paul. It was odd to see a Russian Grand Duke wearing the uniform of an alien nation but the rescued ones cannot be choosers: Dimitry owed his life and his splendidly tailored khaki tunic to what had struck his family two years before as the “cruel injustice” of the Czar. Exiled to Persia for his participation in the murder of Rasputin, he was thus able not only to escape the foul atmosphere of pre-revolutionary St. Petersburg but to save his life from the Bolsheviks and join the British forces operating in Mesopotamia. It was the first time I had seen him since that night in December, 1916, when, after pleading his case with Nicky, I put him aboard a southbound train. Looking at him now, tall, strong and more handsome than ever, I had to smile at the thought of the grief evidenced by his family on that occasion. Had the Czar concurred in their opinion that the young man should be let go scot-free, Dimitry would not have been standing in the lobby of the Ritz in January, 1919, gleaning the admiration of women, his whole life before him.

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4

With everyone predicting that the Government of the United States would be called upon to exercise a sort of benevolent dictatorship over the whole of Europe, I was naturally interested in renewing and cultivating my friendships among the members of the American delegation. Most of them were men of excellent intentions, proud of their victory, touched by the misery of Europe and firm believers in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. They talked eloquently, shook hands vigorously and possessed an unlimited amount of cheerfulness. My friend General Charles G. Dawes constituted a minority of one in that group of inveterate optimists, maintaining as he did that the "real" trouble lay ahead and that no amount of noble talk could atone for the disappearance of ten million able-bodied men. Had the Versailles Mighty been willing to listen to his wisdom, they would have cooked up a much better treaty. Had I myself been clever enough to follow his friendly advice, I should have been spared a great deal of unnecessary humiliation.

"Don't even try to see the Mighty," he said to me in his refreshingly plain fashion, "they won't receive you, they've got no use for fallen men."

"Don't mind Dawes," said the cheer leaders, "he is just naturally gloomy. And do not waste your time with the

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Europeans. The man for you to see is Lansing. Write him a letter and you'll get somewhere."

People who wish to be deceived are easy dupes. On January 9, 1919, I forwarded a letter to Secretary Lansing asking him for the privilege of an appointment and stating that I expected to remain in Paris but a short time. The latter idea was forced on me by my American friends who explained that it was an "old Washington custom" unsurpassed in efficiency.

A week passed. On January 16, I received the following answer from Secretary Lansing:

The Grand Duke Alexander
Hotel Ritz
Paris

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter of January 9th. regarding an appointment which you desired to make with me and regret that owing to the receipt of information to the effect that you were leaving the city immediately, no reply was made to the letter in question.

At the present time, however, it is unfortunately impossible for me to make definite appointments inasmuch as my time is necessarily reserved for official conferences.

I shall be glad to notify you in the event that it is possible for me to arrange a meeting with you.

I have the honour to be, Sir,
sincerely yours

ROBERT LANSING

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Needless to add, the "event" Mr. Lansing was hoping for never arrived. The cheer leaders shook their heads and said in chorus:

"It's only natural. Lansing could not have replied in any other fashion."

I opened my mouth wide.

"But it was your own advice."

"So it was, but we were mistaken. The thing for you to do is to write a good letter to the President."

"What do you mean, a good letter?"

"One that will convey to him the idea of your thoroughly unbiased point of view and of your anxiety to tell the truth and nothing but the truth."

"Do you think he will see me?"

"We know he will."

General Dawes swore and said I was wasting a lot of time that could be otherwise profitably spent on the golf links of St.-Cloud. Once more I disobeyed that man of clear vision and, instead of putting on my plus-fours, locked myself in a stuffy room and sweated out a letter to President Wilson.

President Wilson

Paris

My dear sir,

January 27th, 1919

I would like to meet you and talk to you as man to man. Forget that I am a Russian Grand Duke. Remember only that I am a Russian whose sole aim is to help his country.

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Being a great believer in Divine Justice, I see in you not only the President of the United States but a real Christian who is endeavoring to establish Eternal Peace on earth.

I belong to no party. I never did. Were I to label my political opinions I should say that I have always been a liberal and always saw the solution of all our ills in the universal triumph of a sane Democracy built on the principles of the Gospel.

I have spent as strenuous a life as any man, surviving three wars and three revolutions, and for a period of six months I have been imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. Through all of it I saw the different ways in which Minority deceives Majority and thus creates an ever increasing danger to the future of humanity.

You, sir, are occupying today a position in which no human has been placed in the whole history of Christendom. The peoples of all countries are looking toward you and depending on you for their salvation. That is why I am addressing you. Should you choose so, you may help the one hundred and sixty million Russians to set up a truly free Russia, free from the inequalities of both the past and the present. Should you remain silent, however, you will leave them struggling among the débris of moral and physical collapse.

Do not refuse to see me. I am sure you will be interested to hear what I have to say. I am asking for just a few minutes of your time.

Once more permit me to tell you that this letter is written not by a Grand Duke but by just a Russian.

I remain

sincerely yours

ALEXANDER

Two days later I received the following answer to my letter:

THE RITZ SAGA

Grand Duke Alexander
Hotel Ritz
Paris

Paris, 28th January 1919

My dear sir,

The President asks me to acknowledge receipt of your recent letter and to thank you for it. It would be a pleasure for him to see you and talk over with you the Russian conditions if any opportunity should offer itself, but his time is at present so completely taken up with the business of the Peace Conference that there is really no hour of the day which he can call his own and he is obliged to forego engagements of this kind.

With much regret,

Sincerely Yours

GILBERT F. CHASE

Confidential Secretary to the President

I must admit I was not too surprised. Neither were my American "advisers"! They smiled wisely and said:

"You realize, of course, what THIS means?"

"I do. It means that the President does not wish to see me. In a measure I don't blame him. Why should he compromise the American Government by holding open meetings with a Romanoff?"

"How could you be so naïve!" They gave me a look of pity and reproach. "Can't you read this line?"

"I can. It says—'and he is obliged to forego engagements of this kind.'"

"Why don't you emphasize the last two words—THIS KIND? Can't you decipher even this?"

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"I'll be damned if I can."

"It means—Colonel House! Colonel House! Do you understand now, you simple Peter? It means that all the engagements of this kind are being passed on by the President to Colonel House."

"But why couldn't the President's secretary say so in his letter?"

After the loud guffaws caused by this question had subsided I was told that, in the first place, I would never make a good politician and that, in the second place, I should try to see Colonel House right away, a suggestion I flatly refused to follow. I had met the good Colonel socially on a previous occasion and knew that a "secret conference" with him would enhance neither his world-wide reputation as a modern Sphinx nor my somewhat doubtful standing as a politician. I was permanently through with writing letters and soliciting appointments. Arthur Balfour, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, was the only remaining Versailles Mighty I cared to see. Not so much for the sake of "opening" his eyes on Russia—a job of this magnitude would have required a dozen eye openers—as for the purpose of asking him point-blank: "What have I done to be forbidden to enter England?" I had received a message from the Dowager-Queen who expressed her utter displeasure at my "unwillingness" to visit Marlborough House "if only for a week-end," and my repertory of white lies being pretty well exhausted by so much letter-writing, I

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wanted to enlist Balfour's assistance in concocting further alibis.

"Mr. Balfour would much rather see you in the privacy of his hotel," said his very condescending secretary who was obviously annoyed by my determination to disturb his master's peace of mind. I answered that I did not give a hang about the premises which were to serve as a setting for our meeting, provided the celebrated philosopher and statesman kept his appointment. Accordingly I announced my name to the clerk downstairs five minutes in advance of the given hour. Stepping out of the elevator on Balfour's floor I saw the lanky sloppy figure of Great Britain's Foreign Secretary running for dear life down the corridor toward the "fire exit." For a second I felt like calling after him, but then I thought better of it. After all, we all have our little peculiarities and Balfour's strangeness may have consisted in taking light exercises in the corridors of Parisian hotels. The secretary's face, flushed and dismayed, told me a different story.

"Mr. Balfour deeply regrets that a conference of the utmost importance is depriving him of the pleasure of talking to Your Imperial Highness. He has instructed me to assure you that I will transmit to him, word for word, whatever you may wish to say."

The poor chap was stuttering and stammering. I think he was slightly ashamed of the behavior of his master. I smiled and made for the door.

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"Won't you leave a message for Mr. Balfour?" he asked almost beggingly.

"Yes," I said, "by all means. Tell him that a man of his age should use the elevator."



CHAPTER THREE

A NUMISMAT SETTLES HIS BILLS

I

THERE is no better cure for imaginary troubles than the necessity to fight real ones. I would have grieved for months, thinking of Balfour and Wilson and Lansing, had it not been for the management of the Hotel Ritz, my tailor, my haberdasher and my shoemaker. I owed them money. They wanted to be paid. This meant real trouble overshadowing the Russian policy of the triumphant Allies.

I could not get any money in Paris, a city where I had always been on the giving end. I could have gotten some in London but the British Government would not let me go there. So I had to think and think fast: each morning brought a heap of bills accompanied by letters, nicely worded but leaving no doubt as to the firm determination of their signatories. Had anyone entered my room at that time and seen the strange-looking charts on my writing table, I might have spent the rest of my life in an insane asylum. My charts read as follows:

1. Dorians from Heraclea at Chersonesus and Ionians from Miletus at Theodosia. About 650 B.C. Write letter to

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the fat Italian in Geneva. May cover one quarter of the Ritz bill.

2. The Goths (250 A.D.), the Huns (376 A.D.), the Khazars (about 740 A.D.). Difficult to dispose of. Perhaps Boston. A week-end letter-cable may turn the trick. May get just enough to pay for the two new spring suits.

3. Pharnaces (63 B.C.). Commemorating his investiture with the Kingdom of Bosporus by Pompey. Shoemaker? Perhaps if that stuttering cheat in Rome is still alive.

4. The Byzantine Greeks (1016 A.D.) and the Kipchaks (1050 A.D.). In normal times would have been more than enough to satisfy the Ritz and to cover Easter in Biarritz. Now extremely unlikely. Write to London, Geneva and New York.

5. Macedonians. Eight and twelve Phoenician drachms. Probably the reign of Alexander I (498-454 B.C.). What was the name of that Englishman who wanted to pay any price for them to the heirs of Abdul-Hamid? Write a letter to our former Ambassador in Constantinople. He may recall it. If he does, I am all right.

6. The Thessalian Confederacy (196-146 B.C.). Head of Zeus crowned with oak and Athena Itonia. Never amounted to much. Ferdinand would know the address of the possible purchaser but how to get to Ferdinand? In any event, not before peace is signed. At best won't cover even the shoemaker.

7. Corinth. Probably 500 B.C. The head of Athena.

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Bellerophon mounted on Pegasus and the Chimæra. Very beautiful like all I got through Abdul-Hamid but difficult to dispose of. If I get for both at least one tenth of what I paid for them, my tailor shall be taken care of 100%.

8. Asia Minor. The electrum of Lydia (probably 700 B.C.). Lots of them but all quite primitive, the obverse marked with lines. Took me three months of work in Trebizond and God knows how much money. But that's not an argument for Geneva. Sure to sell it but will just about cover the tip to Olivier downstairs.

9. Hispania (probably 350 B.C.). The Phocæan drachm and the drachm of Emporiæ. Had no business to buy them in the first place. No one could chase the Greeks all around the world. Any price will do, if it's even the price of a wagon-lit compartment to Biarritz.

2

No, I was not delirious. I was merely jotting down for my own guidance various data which had to do with my numismatic collection. It seemed strange that just because a few Dorian traders, dissatisfied with the conditions existing in Heraclea in 650 B.C., had set sail for lands unknown and had settled on the southern coast of the future Russian Empire, the management of the Hotel Ritz in Paris should be paid in full for the rooms occupied by

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Grand Duke Alexander in January, 1919 A.D., but the connection between these two events of the history of mankind was obvious and logical. Had the Dorians stayed at home, there would have been no ancient Greek coins, no vases, no statues buried in the soil of the Crimea, and I would not have been interested in undertaking my costly archæological excavations, first in the neighborhood of my own estate of Ay-Todor, later in Trebizond and elsewhere along the coast of Asia Minor.

It was stranger still that the only thing which enabled me to pay my bills in Paris and assured me of a short breathing spell should be precisely that which had always been considered "raving insanity" and a "costly toy" of an Imperial ne'er-do-well. Looking over my charts, I remembered the words of my father: "Just think, Sandro, of the opportunities you are missing. Why, if you would invest but a fraction of what it costs you to dig in the Crimean soil into sound preferred stocks and government bonds, you would double your annual income and never be in need of cash. If you don't like stocks and bonds, buy oil lands, buy copper, buy manganese, buy real estate, but for Heaven's sake stop spending good money on these bore-some old Greeks."

What would I have done in January, 1919, if I had followed the advice of my practical father and abandoned my archæological excavations in the 1900's? Stocks and bonds? I had bunches of them left in my safe-deposit vault

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in St. Petersburg but even the Bolsheviks who stole them could not have disposed of them at any price because the concerns that issued the stocks had been destroyed by the revolution. Oil lands? Copper? Manganese? Real estate? I had all of that but there was no way to persuade a tailor of the Rue du Faubourg St.-Honoré that he should exchange a pair of flannel trousers for the deed to my apartment houses in St. Petersburg or to my oil lands in the Caucasus.

It pays to be insane, I said to myself with great feeling. No matter how little I was going to get for my Phœnician drachms, my Athenas and Bellerophons, I was going to get something, perhaps enough to keep faith with my creditors and laugh at the people who used to laugh at me. And on top of it, I still had my memories. No Soviet in the world could take from me the pleasure and the thrills of my archæological adventures.

My two summers spent in Trebizond where I lived surrounded by as queer a collection of humans as anyone might wish to meet. Nearsighted, gray-haired German professors brought by me from Berlin, who went about without reading a newspaper for eight months at a stretch and who were blissfully unaware of the latest changes in the world of politics but who could have guessed the reasons of the fall of the Thessalian Confederacy just by looking at a gold coin given to me by Czar Ferdinand of Bulgaria.

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Ferdinand and Abdul-Hamid. The only two really colorful figures produced by the Near East in the twentieth century. Not great rulers but men of individuality. Ferdinand who wanted to be the Little White Father of all the Slavs and who had no peer in the art of diplomatic deceit. Abdul-Hamid, the "bloody" Sultan, who thought that either the Turks must eat the Armenians or the Armenians would wind up by swallowing the Turks. I never discussed politics with these two. We talked on subjects that cultivate friendship. Numismatics. French cuisine. The contradictions in the Old Testament. Only once did Abdul-Hamid volunteer his opinion on what the Russian Czar was facing but on that occasion he spoke as a learned historian. His argument was that no dynasty, whether European or Oriental, had ever been known to survive for more than three hundred years. "Nineteenth-thirteen! From then on things will become dangerous for your family," he said in his excellent French. I thanked him for the warning and we proceeded with our usual exchange of gifts. I got several Macedonian coins, he a huge assortment of Crimean pears, peaches and grapes. According to the European and American editorial writers, he was a monster, a bloodthirsty tyrant, a sadist. I personally knew him as an elderly gentleman who bowed to no one in his knowledge of numismatics and his appreciation of baby-lamb pilaff and stuffed eggplant. To me as to all people who prefer Life to Liberty an entertaining monster

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is a worth-while friend, a sentimental bore a mortal enemy. Both Abdul-Hamid and Ferdinand were highly entertaining, even if the former did slaughter a great many of his subjects and the latter did sell out the Great-Cause-of-Democracy to the Kaiser.

3

I wished I could gather the numismatic collectors in my room, open my trunk and say: "Now listen carefully, gentlemen. You see this beautiful Alexander the Great coin? It was found by me in August, nineteen-hundred-three, in a grave on the spot where ancient Chersonesus stood. The summer was frightfully hot and we had to do most of our digging at night. We would sleep from sunrise to sunset, have our breakfast at seven in the evening and then we would begin to work. For the first time in ten years, since the day of my cousin's ascension to the throne, I was able to ignore the existence of St. Petersburg and its courtiers, politicians and revolutionaries. People who helped me were either hired Tartars who spoke practically no Russian at all or the great experts from Berlin. They cared little that I was a Grand Duke and a member of the Imperial Government. Tartars liked me because I liked to listen to the singsong of their prayers. German professors liked me because I gladly conceded that they knew everything while I myself knew nothing. At four in the morn-

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ing when the moon would disappear behind the mountains we would open a bottle of brandy, not Hennessy, not Martel, but Greek brandy, prepared in the way our Dorian friends used to distill it twenty-five centuries ago. Nights were awe-inspiring and so was the brandy. When we finally reached the bottom of that grave after six weeks of work I wanted to cry. I had hoped we would dig for a month more. Gentlemen, how much am I bid for this beautiful Alexander the Great?"

I never delivered this speech. I simply wrote a letter to a dealer in Geneva and received his answer by return mail. He knew my collection and he did not doubt its authenticity. But he wanted me to understand that we were living in "hectic times." He hoped I would appreciate his position. Nothing would have pleased him more than to pay me what my beautiful coin was really worth. It was breaking his heart to be obliged to propose an inadequate price.

It *was* an inadequate price. It represented about five percent of the pre-war catalogue price and less than one hundredth of one percent of what it had cost me. I accepted this bid by straight telegram. My tailor was sitting downstairs in the lobby, waiting and hoping.

Ten years later I saw in the London *Times* that among the different numismatic "items" displayed at a private exhibition was "one of the rarest Alexander the Great coins which formerly belonged to a member of the Russian Im-

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perial Family and which was acquired by Mr. — in Geneva for the staggering sum of——”

There was a difference of two naughts between the price mentioned in the London *Times* and the price received by me in 1919. The blow was hard but it failed to shake me. I had learned a lot during the ten years that intervened between the two transactions. I am grateful to that dealer in Geneva: there was nothing to prevent him from paying me even less than he actually did.

The bulk of my collection was sold at public auction, partly in Switzerland, partly in England. I was in a frightful hurry to lay my hands on some cash and, although I was not present, my anxiety must have been obvious to the bidders. One of them wrote me a long letter, assuring me that he was going to take good care of the souvenirs of my archæological past. Everybody was happy. The management of the Ritz. The maître d'hôtel of the restaurant. The haberdasher. The tailor. The shoemaker. Even myself. I am still a numismat at heart. As my publishers would say: “Once a numismat . . .”

For the time being I have to be satisfied with reading the catalogues and subscribing to the trade magazines. But should my bankers advise me some day that going through my account they had stumbled upon a balance in my favor, I would be in the market again. It is the best investment—in case of a revolution.

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Bills settled and a few francs left in my pocket, I breathed easier. For a while I did not have to sneak through the lobby with the feeling of having robbed the stockholders of the Ritz. I thought I should catch up with my reading and decided to divide my afternoons between the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Chambre des Députés. There were no books to be obtained in the latter establishment but parliaments intrigued me. I had never heard the great political orators because the appearance of a Grand Duke in Westminster or in the Palais du Bourbon might have caused distress to our ambassadors abroad and unfavorable comments at home. Our own Parliament in St. Petersburg, the Duma, while an excellent place to study the Russian capacity for endless talking, had been a rather poor exhibit of that constructive liberal leadership which, according to the High Command of the Allied Armies, was destined to preserve the freedom of such formerly abused nations as the French and the British. We did have lots of liberals drawing their yearly parliamentary salary from the Imperial Government and they did use the words "constructive" and "leadership" but their speeches invariably dealt with the illnesses of Peter the Great and the lovers of Catherine the Great which provided interesting reading for students of the eighteenth century but left the

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country right where it had been at the moment they mounted the tribune.

An acquaintance of mine, a French banker through whom I was buying airplanes and machine guns during the war was recently elected deputy from his native city and this made it easy for me to secure an admission card to the Palais du Bourbon. On the day of my first appearance in the parliamentary gallery he suggested we lunch together, in a small restaurant in the Rue de Bourgogne where most of his colleagues took their meals. The place was stuffy but friendly. In addressing each other, the majority of deputies present used the singular of the second person, an altogether delightful custom which made me think of Guards' Barracks and the backstage of the Imperial Theatres.

"Passe-moi du sel."

"Eh bien, qu'es'que tu penses de cette affaire en Angleterre?"

"As-tu vu Loucheur?"

I expected they would burst into song any moment but the food was too good for music.

"And now I am going to introduce you to the greatest orator of the Socialist party," said my friend and pointed toward a white-haired, shortish fellow who was bathing in a big plate of bouillabaisse at the opposite table.

"Be careful. He may not care to meet a Grand Duke. Few Socialists do."

"Are you joking?"

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"Not at all. I mean it."

"But what about me? Am I not sitting with you at the same table?"

"Are you a Socialist?"

"Most decidedly."

"A man of your wealth?"

"What has my wealth to do with the fact that only candidates of the Socialist party can be elected deputies in the part of the country I come from?"

"I see," I said, "my mistake."

The great orator turned out to be a man of the world and we discovered we had mutual friends. He asked me whether I had seen the old Duchess — of late. I had.

"Charming woman, isn't she?" I volunteered.

He made a grimace. He thought she was frightfully common.

"Always was and always will be," he explained. "You know, of course, that hers is only a Napoleonic title. Her great-grandfather was a baker in the days of the Directoire."

We all agreed that it was unfortunate. Anxious to learn his opinion about the outcome of the Versailles Conference, I mentioned my efforts to see Clemenceau.

"He is too busy now," said the orator, "fighting the British about that African oil."

African oil? It puzzled me.

"Oh, you know," he exclaimed impatiently. "What do

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you call that place where the British exploit the poor negroes? The richest oil lands in the world. English papers are full of it."

"You don't happen to mean Mosul?" I asked timidly.

"That's the name. I am going to speak about it this afternoon in the Chamber. My party won't permit the British to continue their shameless exploitation of the ignorant colored people."

Mosul was in Mesopotamia. There were no negroes there. Only Arabs who would have been greatly surprised to discover that Mesopotamia had moved from Asia to Africa. However, these were but irrelevant details. What counted was the sentiment.

Our luncheon over, we crossed the street toward the gates of the *Chambre des Députés*. At the sight of my two Socialistic friends the guard-on-duty straightened up and presented arms.

"Good-looking lad," I remarked.

"A typical French soldier," said the great orator. "Best in the world. No nation has an army like ours. Always ready to fight for the freedom of mankind."

I was anticipating with something more than mere pleasure the promised speech on the conditions existing in the Mosul area. I hoped it would help me to learn the program of Democracy, perhaps be inspired by its noble spirit. Disappointment awaited me. No sooner did the handsome President of the Chamber call the deputies to

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order when a disturbance began. A tall, thin gentleman on the extreme right of the house crossed toward the left, approached one of the members of the Socialistic opposition and hit him in the eye. The whole thing happened in less than ten seconds. A free-for-all fight followed immediately. Fists, canes and ink-wells were used.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful scene?" asked the President when the adversaries retired to their seats.

"That scoundrel," explained the tall, thin gentleman with a gesture toward the left, "told my friends that I was a dirty boche."

"Both gentlemen will apologize to each other and to this assembly," said the President.

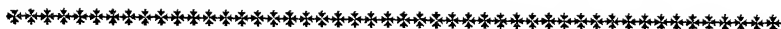
"I am not in the habit of offering apologies to a skunk," replied the tall, thin gentleman, throwing back his head, just in time to dodge a heavy leather-bound volume.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen," begged the President, "do not force me to call in the sergeants-at-arms."

But the deputies were not listening to him. Black and red ink were flowing freely down the white fronts of their shirts.

The President sighed and put on his silk hat.

"What will the hard-working men and women of France say when they hear of this behavior of their legislators?" he exclaimed, turning toward the members of the government. This was unanswerable. We all rose to go.



CHAPTER FOUR

RUSSIA ON THE SEINE

I

"PRETTY poor horsemanship I call it!" said a gruff Russian voice back of me.

"Which one of the three do you mean?"

"Oh, all three of them. Isn't it disgusting?"

I smiled noncommittally. We were standing in the window of Fouquet's second floor, watching Foch, Haig and Pershing ride at the head of the Victory Parade. There was nothing particularly disgusting about the manner in which the three elderly generals sat their mounts but, searching hard as we were, we could not discern the presence of the Russian colors in the rich collection of standards floating above the heads of the triumphant victors, and this, naturally enough, provoked the ire of my compatriot.

"Be a sport," I said. "After all, whose fault is it that we stopped fighting just at the moment when these people needed us most?"

He sneered and pointed toward the battalion of the Portuguese.

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"How about them?" he asked. "A hell of a lot of fighting they did, didn't they?"

This was unanswerable. The truth was that we should have stayed at home and spared ourselves this unnecessary humiliation, but then we would not have been Russians, a nation which insists on doing its grieving in public.

Wherever I went that day I saw Russians. They stood in little groups in the Champs-Élysées, on the Grands Boulevards and in the shady streets of Passy, and they talked as only Russians can. Not listening to each other, repeating the self-same argument over and over again, excelling in pantomime and reaching the uppermost heights of drama. To be sure, it was maddening that France had ignored the sacrifices of her erstwhile ally and that there was nothing in the entire Victory Parade to remind the world that some three millions of Russians had to be killed in order to enable Foch to ride under the Arc de Triomphe, but I for one was more concerned about the fate of the survivors. There must have been not less than one hundred thousand of them in Paris on that day, and this was only the advance guard, only a small fraction of the approaching hosts of refugees.

The defeat of the White forces of Youdenich in the northeast and the surrender of Odessa by the Allied Fleet in the southwest gave impetus to a movement which was to continue in an ever-increasing tempo for five years to come and the like of which had never been witnessed be-

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fore by the civilized world. Lawyers and doctors, artists and writers, bankers and merchants, officers and Cossacks, politicians and adventurers, peasants and landlords—every class of the Russian population was represented in the quarter of Passy favored by the refugees for no special reason except, perhaps, because it is the most expensive and exclusive district of Paris. They had to leave Russia partly because they were afraid of being shot, partly because they realized that there would be no place for them in a State ruled by the Soviets. They came to France because there were boats sailing from Constantinople to Marseilles and because they had always wanted to see Paris. Had they known that they would never go back, possibly they would have preferred to brave the bullets and the ration cards. As it was, they expected to exchange places with Lenin in the nearest future and they developed what in the parlance of the refugees of 1918-1923 was known as "the mentality of the packed handbags." They lived from day to day, borrowing money from each other and promising their landlords and grocers that their bills would be taken care of the moment "Russia is Russia again." The headlines of their papers—there were three Russian papers printed in Paris at that time—told them each morning that the Red Army was about to revolt and that a special train was constantly kept in readiness in Moscow for the badly-frightened leaders of the Soviets. This sounded encouraging. When reprinted by the French papers, it helped to over-

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come the resistance of butchers and innkeepers. There did not seem to be any point in looking for a job or settling down, when in another month or so "order" was to be restored in Russia. And so they sat on the terraces of the cafés and around the green tables in the clubs, wondering in what condition they would find their estates and trying their luck at baccarat and chemin-de-fer. The luck was usually bad and was eating up whatever jewelry or money they had managed to bring with them, but there always remained Paris, the city that accepted anyone who understood that life was short and real enjoyment rare. The Government of the Third Republic may have given Russia a shabby deal but the genial maître d'hôtel of the Abbaye de Thélème had fortunately preserved his uncanny ability to detect the presence of a thousand-franc bill in the pocket of a Russian monsieur whose face he had not seen since 1911.

"Do you remember me, Jules?"

"Mais parfaitement! Monsieur comes from Kieff. He likes to eat caviar with a tablespoon and he prefers the company of ladies of intelligence. Garçon! Encore une bouteille de Clicquot 1903 pour monsieur!"

Searching for a historical parallel, the Parisian newspapers recalled the French emigration of 1791-1793, al-

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though the flight of a few thousands of aristocrats frightened by the clang of the guillotine and the eloquence of Robespierre had little in common with this exodus of over two million intellectuals and tradesmen. Not only was there no Catherine the Great in the Paris of 1919 and no palaces were thrown open to the Russian exiles but the similarity of political opinions which united the Counts and the Chevaliers gathered in Coblenz and St. Petersburg was totally absent in Passy. The French emigrants of 1791-1793 were royalists, each and every one of them, whether supporters of the future King Louis XVIII or champions of the Duc d'Orléans, while the Russian refugees of 1919 belonged to numberless political parties and hated each other much more than they did the Bolsheviks. A vast majority of them were republicans: republicans of the bourgeois type who were thinking of "liberty" in terms of a Raymond Poincaré or a Herbert Hoover; republicans of that quasi-socialistic type which produces millionaire-lawyers in France and millionaire-publishers of radical weeklies in the United States; and finally, not a few of them belonged to the Second Internationale type of republicans and would have gladly embraced the Soviet faith had Lenin been willing to accept their collaboration.

No one except a badly informed American correspondent could have classified that multicolored army as just "White Russian emigration." Pink and reddish, green and

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whitish, they were all waiting for the Bolsheviks to fall so that they could go back to Russia and resume their feuds interrupted by the October Revolution. Meanwhile, they had to do their fighting in the columns of their Paris papers and on the platform of that same stuffy hall in the Rue Danton where in the early 1900's Lenin used to denounce Plekhanoff's fallacies.

One afternoon, while sipping my apéritif on the terrace of the Café de la Tour in the Square Albany, I noticed two men who were exchanging glances of undisguised hatred. Their faces seemed familiar, greatly photographed and connected with some unpleasant memories. There was a considerable distance between their respective tables and the café was crowded, yet they appeared to be interested only in each other, as if unwilling to concede defeat in this battle of looks. Both must have known me because once in a while they turned in my direction, in a manner hardly suggestive of mere curiosity. Must be Russians, I thought, and evidently my enemies, but who? I watched for a moment the elder of the two and then I had it. Savinkoff, the assassin of my cousin Grand Duke Sergei, later Minister of War in the Provisional Government, still later hired agent of the Allies in Siberia and the man for whose head the Soviets would have paid a spectacular reward! I used to see his Napoleonic profile, first in the circulars of the Department of the Secret Imperial Police, then on the Bolshevik posters plastered all over Russia and inviting "all

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honest proletarians to shoot that contemptible bourgeois snake on sight." I would have recognized him at once but he had aged considerably and had grown quite fat.

"Well, well," I said to myself, "in your white spats and with that gardenia in your buttonhole you certainly could pass for a vacationing English stockbroker or a retired Monte Carlo croupier, anything but a legendary bomb-thrower. Wonder who the target of your angry stares might be? Perhaps some prominent Bolshevik on an incognito trip to France."

But nothing in the younger Russian indicated the probability of a Soviet pedigree. For one thing, he was dressed in a neat middle-class fashion while the Moscow emissaries either neglect their appearance completely or go in for flashy ties and silk shirts. I would have taken him for a former agent provocateur of the Imperial Police who might have bothered Savinkoff in the pre-war days but then I noticed his eyes and ears. The ears were bloodless and immense. They stood up like an abnormal outgrowth of the neck. The eyes were small and watery; they reflected meanness and deceit. Mirabeau's description of Barnave came to my mind: "Barnave, tu as les yeux froids et fixes, il n'y a pas de divinité en toi," and this provided the cue. The great orator of the Russian Revolution! The Prime Minister who threatened to "lock up his heart and throw the keys into the sea"! The man who refused to sanction the departure of Nicky and the Imperial Family for Eng-

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land and insisted on their transfer to Siberia. I motioned to the waiter.

"Am I right?" I asked. "That gentleman over there, is it Kerensky?"

"I am sorry, monseigneur," was the blushing answer, "but this is a public café. Unfortunately, we must admit anyone who has the price of a cup of coffee."

He could not understand my delirious laughter. Few Frenchmen would have understood the piquancy of that scene. One had to be a Russian and live through twenty years of assassinations and uprisings in order to appreciate this subtle satire of fate. Savinkoff, Kerensky and a Grand Duke—all three on the terrace of the same third-rate café in Paris, all three in the identically same situation, unable to return to Russia, unwilling to forget the past, choking with toothless hatred, not knowing whether they would be permitted to remain in France and continue to possess the price of a cup of coffee. This was something distinctly new, something that neither the French emigrants of the 1790's nor the hard-bitten Stuarts had ever experienced. No Robespierre sat with the Duc d'Orléans in the latter's unpaid-for room in a dingy inn in Philadelphia and no Cromwell rode by the side of Charles II through the muddy fields of Burgundy in search of a meal and a five-pound loan.

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3

Cafés and restaurants, maîtres d'hôtels and waiters. . . . The settings are humble and the cast of characters is somewhat democratic. But then, it took the Russian refugees of 1919 several more years to reach the promised land of questionable titles. While still in Europe, in a climate unfavorable to the growth of the Czar's "intimate friends" and the Czarina's "confidantes," they had to mix with commoners and patronize vulgar eating places. Early in their exile they met a few Americans who talked well if a bit too loud, and that encounter gave them an idea that there were not enough restaurants in the Western world. Along the great Russian trail leading from Constantinople to Hollywood, via Paris, New York and Chicago, there can still be found a few totem poles of that peculiar refugee craze of the early 1920's. They knew little about the art of cooking, still less about marketing and nothing at all about "waiting," yet they became restaurateurs. Hard drinkers and hearty eaters, they munched their ham sandwiches on the terraces of the Parisian cafés and dreamed of chafing dishes and silver coolers. As customers they could no longer afford it, as restaurant proprietors they could easily write down to profit and loss the cost of their own feasting. The lack of necessary working capital did not stop them. There is something singularly persuasive in the

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arguments of a man speaking French with a Russian accent; they obtained credit. They suspected, if vaguely, that they were going to be bled white by the Interallied Police in Constantinople, the French landlords in Paris and the prohibition agents in New York, but the ultimate result did not matter to them. At least for a short spell they wanted to live again in the atmosphere of clinking glasses and moaning gypsies, even if the glasses were to come from Woolworth's and the gypsies from Brooklyn. It turned out to be an exciting experiment. With the exception of half a dozen professional Russian restaurateurs who joined the ranks of the exiles much later, none of the self-styled caterers of the early 1920's was able to survive the first six months behind the cash register. Generals and colonels found themselves once more walking the Rue Royale and peeping through the half-opened door of Larue's, and it took the real waiters and real cooks to introduce the Kieffsky cutlet to the Western world.

The passing of thirteen years considerably changed the mentality of those two million dreamers who thought at first that their difficulties had been solved the moment they had escaped the pursuing patrols of the Red Police. True enough, they are still talking of "going back" and are still insisting that there is a train kept in readiness for the flight of Stalin but they have unpacked their bags and have settled down. A great majority took up manual labor. Some managed to capitalize their professional education and pre-

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revolution experience. A few achieved fame as artists. A few exploited their looks and titles. A few turned bad and are responsible for that half-sneer with which the average American speaks of the Russian refugees.

All in all, they did rather well—for a nation known for its inefficiency and procrastination. The Britishers or the Americans would hardly have done better if confronted by similar handicaps and struck by similar misfortune. When hearing the complaints of my Wall Street friends whose incomes had been reduced by the depression, I often wonder how they, their wives and their children, would rate if given just one change of clothes and told to get out and run. Would they be able to find for themselves a place in an alien country, to learn its language, to put up with sneers and humiliation, to begin a new life? The question is slightly impertinent but in no other manner can the achievements of the Russian refugees be properly gauged. At that, a New York banker stripped of his money and thrown out on the coast of Rhodesia would have a much better chance than his Russian counterpart who emigrated to America, for the African natives do possess a certain degree of inborn respect for any and all white men.

As if to please the Marxian historians, no casual fancy and no haphazard decision but motives of deep-laid nature

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were guiding the refugees in the choice of their permanent domicile. Difficult as it was to obtain visas and get hold of the price of a transatlantic passage, somehow and in some way all fakes worked their way to the United States. I do not mean to say that every Russian who emigrated to the United States is a fake but I am convinced that no other country in the world drew such an imposing quota of Russian fakes. It surprised me at first that France, with its gambling resorts and ever-present flow of gullible tourists, should have attracted the best elements of the Russian emigration while America, a country that had always been producing and exporting vast quantities of her own bluffers and cheats, should have been preferred by adventurers and impostors, but further investigation helped me to solve this puzzle. I understood that, although the French closely resemble the Americans in their habit of kicking a fallen man, they do it in a more elegant fashion. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred a Russian with a cultural background applying for a position in France receives even less encouragement than he would in the United States but his right to quote his record is admitted and his past performances are recognized. A man who taught international law in the University of St. Petersburg may be turned down by the Sorbonne but his name is known to his French colleagues, his books have been read and a very clear distinction is made between him and an ignorant immigrant from Odessa who began by washing windows

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and wound up by acquiring a block of apartment houses. Not that the French do not worship money and do not dread poverty. But the point is that while the average Frenchman bases his ideas of Russians on the memories of the men he saw and met before the war, the average American's conception of things Russian owes its origin either to the street scene in the Lower East Side or to a performance of the *Chauve Souris*. When a Frenchman sits in a Russian restaurant in Paris, he smiles a knowing smile. He realizes that, not unlike the "dangerous apaches" and *La Vie Parisienne*, the trashy gypsy songs and stalwart porters dressed in the garb of Caucasian mountaineers were brought into existence solely to satisfy "le gout Américain" and are in no way representative of Russia, past, present or future. But when an American descends upon a Russian night club in New York or Chicago, he invariably tries to get something to which the cover charge does not entitle him. He immediately asks whether or not the waitress who served him his chicken sandwich is really a "Princess" and whether or not the husky fellow who helped him out of the taxi is really a "General." Unless the answer is given in the affirmative, he feels he has been cheated out of his three dollars. Were he to be told that the girl is a full-fledged, honest-to-goodness waitress, and that the porter used to be the porter in a Moscow restaurant until that very day in August of 1914 when he became a soldier, one of the 15,000,000 Russian soldiers, and that in fact, with the ex-

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ception of the American-born "gypsies" who belong to no profession, everyone connected with that night club used to be in the restaurant business as far back as the battle of Manilla—were our American to be told this unadorned truth, the chances are he would walk out enraged and would never come back.

Fortunately for all parties concerned, not only is the answer invariably given in the affirmative but no particular eloquence need be exercised to persuade the "General" to sell his silver dagger, "the gift of the late Czar." The poor chap would be delighted to part with the blasted thing, both because he is afraid of it, having never handled a dagger until he came to America, and because he is thoroughly sick of repeating the same lie dozens of times nightly. It is quite instructive to note that no Russian restaurant de luxe has ever become a success in America unless it endowed its waitresses with titles and dressed its artists in ridiculous clothes. Among those that failed ignominiously and irrevocably was the one opened by a famous St. Petersburg chef universally recognized in Europe as a runner-up to Escoffier. His food was excellent and his entertainment tasteful but his employees had the stupidity to admit their common origin and to deny that they had ever so much as seen the Czar from a distance of five miles. In vain did I warn him that no man should dare take such liberties in a country where even Broadway actresses tell the public of their "intimate friendship" with the last

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Czarina. He limited his conversation with the customers to the discussion of sauces and entrées. He lasted six weeks. It so happens that in his youth he was the chef of the cuisine of the Palace of Czarskoie-Selo.

5

By and by—the reshuffling of the refugees had consumed the first ten years of their exile—each country of the world got the type most suited to its requirements. The South American countries attracted the men who liked farming and the men who insisted on serving in the Guards, be it Imperial Guards or the Guards of an indefatigable pretender to the Presidency. Former diplomats and former bankers fitted rather well in what is left of the Edwardian society in England; it shocks them to witness the black-and-white parties in the salons of Mayfair but the knowledge of the fact that the Carlton Club remains in its usual place and that the antics of Montagu Norman are as silly as ever helps them to digest the presence of Ramsay MacDonald in Downing Street and the reign of Noel Coward in Piccadilly. The solid comforts of British life cured their Russian hysteria. It is reassuring indeed to open the morning papers at the breakfast table and realize that London is always the same grumpy, rugged London, with every politician still prophesying the doom of the Empire in the classical Chamberlainian manner, with Lord

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Rothermere frothing at the mouth and raising the dickens on the pages of his bloated *Daily Mail* as of yore, with Bernard Shaw still sticking out his tongue at far-away America, with the agony column of the venerable *Times* still bringing its merry tidings of the all-forgiving Richards and willing-to-start-again Joans. So thoroughly and amazingly British have the Russians become in London that when talking to them it is difficult to believe that right across the Channel, less than three hours by air, are to be found hundreds of thousands of their compatriots who continue to ponder over such things as "the real face" of the Revolution and the right of a Government to kill.

As a rule the Russian fakes fare badly in England. The editors of the social columns have a disconcerting habit of consulting the Almanach de Gotha; the eldest members of the better clubs are able to tell even after the tenth Scotch-and-soda the name of the youngest son of the third cousin of that Russian Prince who used to live in Curzon Street away back in the 1870's; and finally, there are a great many Britishers who often visited Russia before the war and were received not only in roadhouses. No Britisher so far has asked me to verify the authenticity of this or that "Prince" or "Count." Everyone in England, including the newspaper men, realizes that even the genuine bearers of those Russian titles never constituted "royalty" or had any connection with the Imperial Family but were simply the

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descendants of commoners elevated for some services rendered to the Crown. It really takes a person who wants to be duped not to distinguish between a raving impostor and a man brought up in an environment of a certain dignity. And this is why I had made it a point early in my exile never to answer inquiries as to the authenticity of titles. I still receive them by the hundreds. All of them come from America and Americans. Without a single exception all of them are made by people who ought to know better.

"You must tell me," recently said an American lady who spent a lifetime in the corridor between the Vendôme and the Cambon entrances to the Ritz, "whether or not Prince —— is a real Prince."

"I will tell you nothing," I answered. "I am not an information bureau. Why don't you have that chap looked up by your husband's staff of investigators? After all, a Prince is not a South American loan. You don't have to sell him to widows and orphans."

"But you don't understand," exclaimed the lady, "both my husband and myself like him and my daughter . . ."

"Good," I said, "what else do you wish?"

"But is he a Prince?"

"Is that South American loan your husband floated still paying interest?"

"I don't see the connection."

"I do," I said. "Anyone who knows so much about what will happen in South America in the next ninety-nine

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years ought to know something about Russian Princes."

"How would you like it," she returned with a wry smile, "if one of your sons was about to marry an American girl and another Grand Duke refused to vouch for his authenticity?"

"I don't have to worry about it. Thank God, every one of my six sons has married a penniless Russian refugee. They don't have to listen to the drivel about the unfortunate heiress who loved a clean-cut American youth but married a vicious titled foreigner."

"You are bitter."

"Not at all. I simply believe in the law of demand and supply. You people were always after Princes and Counts. Well, you've got them now, thousands of them. So what else do you wish?"

6

Among the many brilliant short stories written by the late Jules Lecomte there is one which is my favorite. If I were the Russian Minister of Education I would have it reprinted on the opening pages of the First Reader. It deals with a prostitute who paced up and down the Grands Boulevards all night long searching in vain for a client. Finally, shortly before dawn, she spotted a gentleman who smiled at her and seemed to be willing to open negotiations.

"It is bad for a man to be alone," she said feelingly and

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was about to offer her arm when he spoke up. She stopped short and listened for a moment. Then she gasped. "It would be my rotten luck to meet a Russian of all the people in the world and at this hour of the morning!"

The gentleman was taken aback.

"What's wrong with the Russians," he asked, "don't we pay well?"

"There is something besides money in our lives, my friend," said the prostitute. "I'd rather go with a Frenchman and get gypped or with an American and get man-handled than with a Russian. On your way, my friend!"

"But why? You must tell me the reason."

"Why? Have you got the nerve to ask me why? Don't you know it yourself? Well, my friend, I shall explain it to you. It's like this. You people have the habit of first taking all that a woman has to give and then tearing your hair and carrying on and crying and telling all about your beautiful fiancée Sonia who is the cleanest girl in the world and who must be saved from ruining her life with a man who shared the bed of a French prostitute. Good morning, my friend! Give my regards to M. Dostoievsky."

I know all there is to be known about the Russian exiles. I shared their bread and their pathos was not strange to me. I watched their heroic efforts to build a New Life and I do not overlook their ugly shortcomings. I recognize that for each Russian fake who married American millions there are hundreds who died in the French Foreign Legion

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and thousands who starved in Turkey; that for each cheap vaudeville performer who posed as "the former soloist of His Imperial Majesty" on Broadway there are scores of artists of unquestionable talent who drove taxis in Paris and worked in the steel plants of Pennsylvania; that for each adventurer who made his listeners weep with the recital of his "lost millions" there are dozens of former multimillionaires who never mentioned their railroads and factories in Russia. But with it all, there is something which neither I nor History can or will forget: that the two million Russian exiles are exactly the selfsame people who first took from the Empire all that it had to give—protection against the mob, license to exploit peasants, to underpay workers and to mulct stockholders, a life of comfort and charm—and then, when there remained nothing to be gotten from the Empire, they sat on the edge of the bed and cried and complained that they had not been faithful to the dream of their youth, the beautiful girl known as Revolution.

Sometimes I think it was a fortunate thing for the Czar that he finished his life as he did. How would he feel were he to live in Paris or New York and hear "the glory and the glamour of the Empire" described for the benefit of rubbernecks by the people who deserted him when he needed them most? In his lifetime he never had a single friend among his subjects. Now in Hollywood alone he would have discovered thousands of them. Had he ever

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had at his disposal as many "aides-de-camp" and "guardsmen" as can be met within one week of cocktail parties in New York, he would be alive now and sitting on the throne of his ancestors.

CHAPTER FIVE

IT HAPPENED IN BIARRITZ

I

ONE morning—it was still January, 1919, and I was still living in the Ritz Hotel in Paris waiting for the long-delayed turn of the tide—a salvo of half-curious, half-excited glances greeted my appearance in the restaurant. Conversation at all tables stopped and all heads turned in my direction. I looked in the mirror questioningly, expecting to discover a torn sleeve or at least a missing button. Nothing short of a breach of etiquette of that nature could have caused so great a commotion, for by that time I had long ceased to be a novelty around the Ritz.

My fears allayed, I settled at a table, ordered breakfast and began to peruse my mail. Perhaps, I thought, a letter might have arrived containing some startling news which was already known to everybody in Paris. Once more I was wrong. I found several bills, a few solicitations for autographs and an invitation from my old friend the Duchess de Broglie to attend a dinner party she was giving that night. Nothing else. Not even a threatening missive from a Communist crank. Seeing that the people were still glar-

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ing at me, I shrugged my shoulders and hid my countenance behind the morning paper.

A badly smudged group photograph on the front page attracted my attention at once. I could not recognize the faces, but all the men wore the uniforms of the Russian Imperial Guard. I looked at the caption and only then noticed a two-column headline which read:

**FOUR RUSSIAN GRAND DUKES SHOT
GRAND DUKES NICHOLAS, GEORGE, PAUL AND
DIMITRY, TWO BROTHERS AND TWO COUSINS OF
GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER WHO IS AT PRESENT
HERE WERE EXECUTED BY THE SOVIETS IN ST.
PETERSBURG YESTERDAY**

That was all. The dispatch itself contained but a few lines and gave no further details except that "the burial place of the four Grand Dukes has not been disclosed by the Soviet Government."

I remember folding the paper and trying to squeeze it into my side-pocket, a rather difficult thing to do considering the odd size of the French dailies. Not that I was stunned. I knew it had to come, sooner or later. I had expected it for weeks and months, but now that it had actually happened my mind suddenly refused to function and I could not solve the puzzling nature of the reasons which had prompted the destruction of these four men who had always kept aloof from the political turmoil of Russia and

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who could not have presented any danger whatever to the triumphant march of the revolution.

For a moment I thought of the four of them and the lives they had led. Nicholas—a dreamer, a poet, a historian of out-and-out republican tendencies, a disillusioned bachelor worshipping the memory of his only love, the Queen of a Scandinavian country. George—a modest boy of not too many words who wanted to be left alone with his paintings and children. Dimitry—a hawkish giant madly in love with horseflesh, a confirmed and enthusiastic woman-hater, a student of the Bible and a prophet of Armageddon. Paul—handsome, kind-hearted, supremely happy in his morganatic marriage, not caring a snap about monarchy or power. The utter uselessness of this slaughter must have been clear even to the most pitiless of the Communists.

I wondered what I should do next and whether there existed a way of learning some additional details. I turned and saw the maître d'hôtel. It appeared he was standing in back of me with the tray in his hands, possibly watching my reaction. Our eyes met. I recalled he had always been a particular favorite of both my brothers.

"No doubt, Monseigneur would prefer to have his breakfast sent upstairs," he suggested in a muffled voice, and this brought me back to my senses. I became conscious of the tense expectation of the lookers-on and realized that they were yearning for a grand theatrical gesture.

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"You are very kind, Olivier," I said, perhaps a shade too dryly, "but I am quite comfortable here."

So I remained at the table and ate my breakfast slowly, with every eye in the restaurant riveted upon me as if asking how it was possible for a man to butter his toast and sweeten his coffee when four of his kin had been shot but twenty-four hours before.

That night I attended the dinner party given by the Duchess de Broglie and braved a still greater attack of outraged conventionality.

"You here?" whispered the people who were accustomed to measure the intensity of sorrow by the sourness of face and the width of the black band on the sleeve.

"Why not?" I asked them in turn and let it go at that.

There would have been no point in my explaining to them that no firing squad in the world can extinguish that spark of immortal energy and eternal human effort which was known to me as the Grand Duke Nicholas Michailovich of Russia. There is hardly ever any point to a dispute between Faith and Prejudice. I kept my convictions intact. They grasped the opportunity to say that I "drank champagne and danced" while my slaughtered brothers were being buried in Potter's Field. I deemed them pitiful. They called me savage.

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2

Even today, with thirteen years and several more graves separating me from that turning point in my itinerary, I find it extremely difficult to explain why the execution of my two elder brothers should have sharpened in me an irresistible urge to live and recapture what I had been robbed of, first, by the necessity to serve the Empire when still a mere child, then by the two fierce decades of wars and revolutions. Searching for a precedent in the history of the French Revolution—as every exile invariably does—I came across the celebrated answer of Abbé Siéyès, the inspirator of the liberal doctrines of 1789 and the future Minister of State under Louis XVIII, who used to parry all queries as to what he had been doing during the four years of the red terror with the same caustic remark: “Gentlemen, I have lived!”

It is easier to survive than to “live” and, having been fortunate enough to save my six feet three from bullets, I was now mapping a short cut toward a fulsome and care-free life, something that until then I had learned to know only from books and hearsay. Although fifty-three and at least twice that much in memories, I refused to bow to the impossibility of retracing my early twenties. Come what may, I wanted to reclaim my rights to what I had missed while lunching in palaces, fighting moronic statesmen and

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hibernating in the Imperial Council. The fear of ridicule itself failed to shatter my dream of becoming once more that roving sailor of thirty years ago who believed that sooner or later he should succeed in discovering the Land of Harmony.

Naturally enough I was looking for encouragement, but the plentiful advice given to me by my French friends sounded like a distinct anticlimax. They were preaching prudence, glorifying the theory of a half-loaf and suggesting "advantageous apartments," while the very idea of settling down to the monotonous existence of a pitiful "has-been" struck me as rather too elaborate a form of suicide. Nice as Paris was in its amazing ability to dignify idleness and exact genuine coins for counterfeit pleasures, Paris stood for the Past. It suggested a cemetery, a cemetery of ruined reputations and insolvent doctrines. The more I sat around the Ritz and the more I listened to the inane mumblings coming from Versailles, the less I wanted to remain in Europe. Somewhere, fourteen hundred miles away, there still was Russia. The clever statesmen thought it "would recover very soon," meaning that the grand dukes, the bankers and the generals would return to St. Petersburg and resume their occupancy of palaces, Stock Exchange and the Guards' Barracks. The term "recovery" seemed to be grossly misused, but I never took part in these arguments for the simple reason that I would not have taken the whole of Russia as a gift. I was through with Russia,

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monarchistic, communistic or otherwise, and I hoped to God I would never lay my eyes on St. Petersburg again.

This limited my choice to just two possibilities: to go to the United States and accept the patronage of my American friends or to migrate to one of those idyllic islands in the Pacific which I first had visited in the late 1880's and where even a large family can subsist joyfully and comfortably on practically no money to speak of. Had I been alone I would have taken the very first boat sailing for New York. As a married man and the father of seven children I favored the Fiji Islands project.

So I wrote a lengthy letter to my wife and sons, describing for their benefit the lackadaisical natives, the fragrant flowers and the flaming sunsets of the Pacific and imploring them to move to a part of the world where one is given a munificent chance to assemble the bits and pieces of a life cut by the scissors of history. I waxed quite eloquent and felt so confident of the results that I began gathering various data on the Fiji Islands and went about making necessary preparations. Then my family's answer arrived. It openly expressed their fears for my mental balance. It labeled as sheer lunacy all my dreams and plans. "Why in the world," they asked, "should we hide ourselves in a God-forsaken spot when the coming six months may see the reestablishment of a legitimate régime in Russia."

This nearsightedness appalled me. This continuous dwelling upon the same hopeless subject of "going back"

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suggested not so much the faith of a patriot as the persistence of an indefatigable woodpecker. My family's letter, taken as a whole, sounded frightfully middle-class, as unfortunately a vast majority of royal letters and ideas do.

For the second time in my life I thought of my marriage as a handicap and a bondage. Twelve years before, while spending a summer in Biarritz, I had met a woman for the sake of whom I would gladly have quit my family and become a farmer in Australia had she been willing to forget the preachings of her bishop. A fascinating combination of modern sportsmanship and thoroughly female charm, she possessed every ingredient that goes to make a perfect companion save a bit of logic and a dash of imagination. We went together to Venice. We met in Paris. We took frequent trips to Switzerland. I never had to coax her. She accepted my company in the spirit of one who realizes that genuine love is more than enough to counter-balance a slight irregularity of relationship. In due course of time I broached the subject of our future and offered an open and a permanent association. She said "no." A flat and unhesitating "no." It seemed that her bishop, while willing to close his eyes on our week-end trips, would have been certain to protest against a definite liaison with a married man. My friend explained that she wanted a wedding, a church wedding. She knew it would necessitate my asking the Czar to permit me to divorce his sister, a thing unheard-of in the annals of the Imperial Family, but this

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fact did not change her determination. She said one had to draw the line. It puzzled me, my edition of the Good Book having failed to make the fine distinction between an association with a married man and a marriage to a divorced man. I pleaded. I argued. I finally talked to my wife, who was likewise in the habit of taking her bishop's advice. The whole thing wound up in a smash. I ceased to be a loyal husband and I lost at the same time the greatest opportunity of my life. Xenia decided that I did not love her any more, while my perfect companion went on her way. Both committed a grave mistake, both fell victims to their misinterpretation of Christianity. I never stopped loving Xenia, though in a fashion which was entirely different from what I felt toward the woman of Biarritz. One was the mother of my children. She radiated security and personified the established order of things. She stood for those traits of my character which were developed by years of military grind, by lectures on duties and responsibilities, by ceremonies of the Court, by Te Deums and Masses in cathedrals. The other appealed to my adventurous spirit. She was bringing back the transitory beauty of youth. She awakened in me my original self—a boy who dreaded to be a Grand Duke.

All this took place in 1907. One might have thought that the passing of twelve years, accompanied as it had been by the thunder of a major tragedy, would make my Biarritz romance look pale and insignificant, but, in truth,

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nothing, not even the débâcle of Russia, mattered to me so much as the loss of that woman. Her smile, her lithe figure, the way she would walk into the room looking at me side-wise as if amused by the ingenuity of her own ever-varying apologies for being late, the manner in which she would settle in a chair and light her colored cigarette, and that somewhat vague but delightfully remorseless day of our first meeting—I kept these memories alive throughout the years of the war and I cherished them in the dreary months of my imprisonment by the Bolsheviks as something which enabled me to look back upon my past with gratitude and tenderness.

I could easily have discovered her whereabouts through our mutual friends in Paris but meeting her again would have endangered my illusions. I feared I had aged considerably more than twelve years, and as for her—I preferred to retain her image as I saw her first, in all the resplendence of her fascinating youth, standing at the pole of the eighteenth hole on the links in Biarritz, sunburned and busying herself with her unruly auburn hair.

Although not wishing even to try to find her, I continued to love her in a detached sort of way, free from suffering but with an ever-increasing longing to revisit the scenes of my happiness. There was nothing more for me to do in Paris and the moment I received the news that my family had safely embarked aboard H.M.S. *Marlborough* and that they intended to rest for a while on the Island of

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Malta, I left for Biarritz at once, promising myself to stay there as long as my fastly thinning means would permit.

3

Crowds of Americans and Britishers were coming to Biarritz for the Easter holidays. Sitting at my usual table on the terrace of the Miremont Bar—the same table I had occupied on each of my pre-war visits—I kept a vigilant watch, hoping and fearing that at any moment now I would behold my perfect companion of 1907.

Nothing had changed in Biarritz in the thirty years I had known it. Fashions were different and lipsticks had acquired the rights of full-fledged respectability, but the “rules of the game” remained identically the same: in 1919 just as in 1889 it was agreed in advance between all parties concerned that whatever may happen between them and to them while in Biarritz shall be forgotten upon their return to Paris.

“Ah, la Saison Russe! On n’a vu rien depuis . . . (Ah, the Russian Season! We haven’t seen anything since then . . .)” sighed the gray-haired old-timers, remembering the days of such lavish spenders and reckless cavaliers as my late cousin Grand Duke Alexis, but then in the days of Alexis they were sighing over the days of Empress Eugénie, so even in this respect the delightful Basque resort had retained its thoroughly crystallized features of the

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Capital of Romance conducted in a modern fashion but inspired by the shadows of the great lovers of yesteryear.

I played golf every day and sometimes when I would get up sufficiently early and arrive at the links ahead of the foursomes of bankers and brokers—so distinctly “1919” in their platinum-hooded Hispanos—I would feel back in 1907, looking at the never-changing expanse of the all-ignoring ocean and going over the eighteenth hole that lay right opposite my former villa. On reaching the pole I would stop and wait. I dared not ask myself what I was waiting for because I would have been obliged to confess that in the back of my mind was lurking a childish, an infinitely childish hope that she might yet appear from nowhere and join me in the setting of our first meeting.

Two weeks passed. I waited patiently and peacefully. The spirit of joyful laziness permeating the air of the Basque country was gradually performing its usual miracle of bringing harmony into a heart that had grown accustomed to beat to the measure of discord. I walked a lot, drank a bit and spent long hours reading the Bible. The book of Revelation, my favorite during the war, left me unimpressed under the skies of Biarritz, so I switched to the Song of Songs. It was gratifying to think that deprived as I was of all my earthly possessions I could still indulge in the luxury of sipping a glass of red wine and reading the lines immortalizing the comeliness of the Shulamite.

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"Return, return, O Shulamite; return, return that we may look upon thee . . ."

I never got beyond this concluding verse of chapter six. It was my signal to lay the Good Book aside and begin to dream. I saw myself a farmer in Australia, separated by thousands of miles from what was happening in Russia and fully satisfied with the company of my beloved. I visualized my "second family" raised by me in the way I wanted and not in the platitudinous fashion established by my mad great-grandfather, Emperor Paul, for the generations of Romanoffs to come. The Australian branch of the Romanoffs! Perhaps, brought up in a different atmosphere, they would have endowed the House that suffered from all sorts of ancestral curses with new blood and new ideas. . . .

I raved on and on, charting in minutest detail the course of life of that imaginary Australian family of mine. I overlooked nothing. I expected to have three boys and one girl. They were never to visit my native country. I preferred to keep them immune from that sustained tragedy which has been, is and shall always be Russia. . . .

I must have entirely succumbed to the spell of these adolescent dreams because one afternoon I suddenly jumped up, dressed and rushed to the golf links for the second time that day. The approach of the cocktail hour had sent all players scurrying back to town and for several minutes I sat alone near the first green. Then I heard the

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sound of a powerful motor. I turned and saw a blue Rolls-Royce stop some three hundred feet away from where I was. A tall woman, dressed in white, stepped out and took her golf bag from the driver. The next moment I was running. I felt certain it was she. No one else could have possessed that rare combination of broad shoulders and extremely narrow ankles. With the hot and strong wind blowing in my face and the words "Return, return, O Shulamite" ringing in my ears, it seemed it would take me hours to cover those three hundred feet. She took a swing, made a long drive, evidently unaware of a hatless man running toward her, and then, just as I was about to shout her name, she turned around to arrange her red-and-yellow scarf and I saw that she was not "she." Same figure, same height, same unruly auburn hair, same contours of a pale oval face, but there the resemblance stopped. The blue eyes of this one reflected coldness and annoyance, the green eyes of the other wore a constant smile of teasing mockery. She looked between twenty-eight and thirty but the manner in which she sized me up, with a frown of exaggerated indifference, suggested that she may have been either less or British.

I bowed, received no bow in return and stepped aside. She continued to play and I followed her for nine holes, always keeping between us a distance affording an alibi. My curiosity aroused and the sight of her thin, tall, broad-shouldered, narrow-ankled figure reminding me so vividly

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of my perfect companion, I would readily have walked by her side for even thirty-six holes, if necessary, but she played just nine. Then she went back to her car, without so much as another glance at me.

"This finishes it," I said aloud, which was a lie, because I knew she had made a considerable impression on me and that I would do all in my power to see her again.

Immediately after dinner I went to the Casino, supposedly to shake hands with some American friends, in fact to try to find the lady of the blue Rolls-Royce.

She was not there, and this first saddened me, then made me furious with myself—the two unmistakable signs of a man falling in love. By midnight I surrendered to the truth and turned the conversation at our table toward the "new after-war faces" to be seen in Biarritz.

"Do you happen to know," I asked my friends, "the name of that fascinating young lady who comes to the links around the cocktail hour, driving in a blue Rolls-Royce and playing all by herself?"

No, they did not know her but they supposed I could very easily learn all I wanted by watching for her at the Miremont Bar and asking the maître d'hôtel.

"But that means waiting until tomorrow!" I exclaimed innocently, causing a thunderous outburst of laughter and a great deal of teasing.

"Many a sage," said a grumpy gentleman present, "has made a perfect damn fool out of himself just by staying at

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the golf links after the cocktail hour. . . . Golf is a game that can be safely played only in the morning."

Evidently he did not know that back in 1907 I used to play it only in the morning. . . .

4

The following noon found me firmly entrenched in the Miremont at a table facing the entrance where I could see everyone coming from the street. So afraid was I of missing my mysterious lady that I greeted my friends of the previous night rather lukewarmly. I anticipated they would ask me to join them and I dreaded to lose my post of observation. They took it good-naturedly and sent me a short note which said: "Patience, patience and more patience. . . ." Just then the now familiar Rolls-Royce stopped in front of the Miremont. I stood up to get a better view. She was alone again, and the maître d'hôtel rushed toward her. She waved him aside.

"I am looking for someone I know," she said in those jerky tones which seem to be expressly cultivated by the British women of the younger generation.

Before I had a chance to congratulate myself on the correctness of my prognosis, she went inside and made straight for the table occupied by my friends. Embarrassing as it was for me to join them now after having declined their original invitation, I felt no hesitancy in doing it. I

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would have broken each and every rule of etiquette and decent behavior for the sake of making the acquaintance of that woman. And besides, I said to myself comfortingly, why did they lie to me last night pretending not to know her?

Duly introduced—her name meant nothing to me, it was just another British name—I sat beside her and began by saying that we had very nearly met the day before on the golf links.

“Really?” she replied coldly and that was as much as she chose to say during our first encounter. A few minutes later she got up and left.

I did not need to ask many questions. One never does when taking cocktails with Americans in Biarritz. In less than three Martinis I was given a wealth of information pertaining to the none-too-talkative lady. She was twenty-five and separated from her husband. The rest consisted of gossip, unverified and commonplace.

A series of fretful days ensued. My Bible closed and peace of mind gone, I commuted between the golf links and the Miremont, looking in vain for the sight of the blue Rolls-Royce. Finally I could not stand this suspense any longer and decided to make a tour of the hotels. I learned that she had been staying at the Palais but left for Paris five days ago, precisely two hours after I had met her in the Miremont. That night I slept on the train.

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5

The masters of the art of pursuit tell us that one can win almost any woman by applying a sufficient amount of persistence. Persistent I was, probably even annoying. But it would be a gross overstatement to say that I succeeded in really winning her. No fifty-three could or ever did win a twenty-five. Self-evident as is this truth, I overlooked it in 1919. I would joyfully ignore it again could I live my life anew. So long as there remains one man in this world of ours, he will be anxious to risk what he has in his pathetic attempts to get what he cannot reach.

I had Xenia. That was a certainty, both in 1907 and in 1919. I was willing to lose her, in 1907 because I tried to be an ensign of twenty instead of a retired admiral of forty-one, in 1919 because I thought I met someone who resembled a woman who had turned me down twelve years before. . . .

Looking back upon my last love-débâcle—it was the last, the very last—I realize that I was never able to distinguish between the three faces, each one of them precious, each one appealing: Xenia, my perfect companion of Biarritz, my blue-eyed British lady. I needed all three of them and I was prompted in my love for them by the three vastly different but equally formidable forces. My Loyalties. My Memories. My Quest of Youth.

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Each time I came to the point when I had to decide and choose I trembled and hesitated, not through cowardice but because of sheer inability to make up my mind.

In its essentials my sad affair of 1919 developed along the lines of my romance of 1907, although this time I was, of course, both handicapped and aided by the prefix "ex" being added to my Imperial title. I gained in freedom what I had lost in estates. On one hand, I ceased to be a man protected by the secret police and watched by the Russian Embassy; on the other hand, I was no longer able to afford the luxuries I wanted to provide for the woman I loved.

My pursuit lasted three years and covered a lot of territory. Accustomed as she was to divide her year between Paris, Deauville, Lido, Biarritz and the French Riviera, she naturally expected me to follow her and felt no inclination to change her well-established routine. She said that if my love for her measured up to my persistence it should culminate in our marriage. . . .

Once more I had to face Xenia. I hated to do it because it struck me as being so beastly cruel to crown my wife's tragedy with the demand of a divorce, but there was no other choice. Having forfeited my happiness in 1907 I was determined to fight for it now. The whole trouble lay in the fact that it was going to be a very one-sided fight, for

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never since the day I married her had Xenia as much as reproached me or raised her voice.

Our explanation was painful and useless. Just as I anticipated it, she sat perfectly quiet. Not a word of protest. Not a frown of indignation. Her late brother himself could not have been nicer. . . .

I talked. She listened. Until the very end I could not guess what was on her mind. Then she smiled Nicky's smile and said she would gladly sacrifice everything and anything in order to make me happy but she simply must consult her bishop! Nothing at all had changed under the sun in so far as her ideas of a Christian's duties were concerned. . . . I could no more make her understand the utter absurdity of her decision than I could years ago force her brother to keep Russia out of a war with Japan. Both possessed that certain strange something which people mistook for weakness but which helped them stand still in the face of a cannonade.

Needless to add, the bishop turned his thumbs down. He would not have been a Russian bishop had he been capable of sympathizing with life.

I raved. I threatened. I grunted in mortal agony. All to no avail. Xenia was still her brother's sister, so I had to break the bad news to my prospective bride.

"I am accustomed to know exactly where I am heading," she said firmly, and that was the end.

She got up,—we were sitting on the terrace of the Mire-

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mont,—tied her red-and-yellow scarf and motioned to her driver.

I remained alone. I am still alone. It took me several years more to realize that even bishops can be right, sometimes.



CHAPTER SIX

OUR AFFECTIONATE COUSINS

I

THE 1920's crashed in like a drove of pursued madmen.

They promised to hang the exiled Kaiser before Christmas; and the youthful King of Greece was bitten to death by his pet monkey.

They carried the body of the Unknown Soldier to a sumptuous rest under the Arc de Triomphe; and disabled poilus were begging along the line of the solemn procession.

They sounded twelve colossal sirens to announce to the population of Paris that a man by the name of Georges Carpentier had just been knocked down in far-away New Jersey; and a President of France was picked up on the railroad tracks at dawn, clad in a pair of silken sky-blue pajamas.

They wrote forty thousand words explaining to the statesmen of Germany that the payment of sixty-four billion dollars constituted a privilege and a pleasure, and a census of the City of Berlin revealed that a vast majority

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of its children knew of the existence of butter solely from hearsay.

The 1920's marched on, past night clubs and bread lines.

I watched this fascinating show breathlessly. I would not have missed it for the world. True enough, the arrival of the New Epoch found me standing on the side lines, in the rôle of a mere spectator and in the company of three million other Russian refugees who came by boat, by train, afoot, on horseback and astride a camel; but not even for a moment did I regret my absence from the cast of characters. It relieved me of all responsibility for the success of the show. It enabled me to cheer and hiss. Most of the star performers, the surviving sovereigns of Europe, being my relatives and friends, I was permitted to come and see them back-stage. In fact, I spent the better part of the 1920's perambulating between London, Rome and Copenhagen, where the members of my family were accepting the hospitality of our royal cousins.

At first we felt distinctly ill at ease in each other's presence. Our words were meaningless, our silence eloquent. We, the exiled Romanoffs, were hampered by an excess of self-consciousness. They, the reigning Windsors, Savoias and Glücksbergs, were trying to hide their embarrassment under a thick veil of overdone politeness. Deep in our hearts we thought it was only a question of time before they too would join our ranks. Deep in their hearts they blamed our mishaps on our own foolishness. We tried to

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warn them. They hoped to God that ours was not a contagious disease. Experts extraordinary of the technique of revolutions, we assumed a knowing mien on watching a procession of unemployed pass a royal palace, and this "professional habit" of ours caused no little irritation to our hosts, sick with Russia.

Externally, however, we were as close as ever, calling each other by our pet names, inquiring about the health of each other's wives and never failing to incorporate the words "your affectionate cousin" in the concluding line of our letters.

The outsiders thought it odd that a letter addressed from Buckingham Palace to a modest two-room apartment in Paris should be signed "Your affectionate cousin George R. I." And an American friend of mine suggested that we were "just like Southerners." This comparison made up in wit what it lacked in exactitude; the aid given by a wealthy son of Virginia to his less successful kin of Alabama causes no unfavorable comment in the former's neighborhood, while our eleven "affectionate cousins" could never forget the existence of opposition parties in their respective parliaments.

A niece of mine invited by a Balkan queen to board the royal train for a trip to Paris was told at the last moment

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that she would have to make different arrangements, because the radical papers were about to accuse Her Majesty of silently surrendering the country's claims to a former Russian province.

An elderly cousin who had the intention of settling in Italy learned to his dismay that his presence there might cause all sorts of complications to the Crown. The people were willing to "forgive" him for having headed the "armies of the reaction," but the fact that his wife was a sister of the Queen of Italy made the link between the two families a bit too close to suit the politicians.

On top of all, as if to make our situation still more difficult, we discovered at an early date that in order to remain *personæ gratæ* in the Allied countries we must refrain from even corresponding with our German relatives. Anxious as I was to visit my niece, the Crown Princess of Germany, and my favorite cousin, Prince Max of Baden, I had to think of my sons in London and Rome. . . . The passing of time did away with these cruel prejudices, and I now often receive letters of great understanding and touching sweetness from the Crown Princess; but unfortunately Prince Max died while it was still considered highly compromising for me to renew my lifelong friendship with the last chancellor of the German Empire. It seems that his "unforgivable crime" consisted in remaining just as loyal to his country as the royal families of England, Belgium,

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and Italy had been to theirs. Who could have thought years ago, when he and I were making sly passes at the American girls on the tennis courts of Baden-Baden, that a day would come when I would not dare even to send a message of sympathy to my poor Max!

When the first excitement caused by our miraculous escape had subsided, and our "affectionate cousins" had learned all that was to be learned about the end of Nicky, and the reporters had ceased to haunt us for "exclusive stories," the moment arrived when we could not further postpone our encounter with the problem of readjustment. We faced it bravely though clumsily. In allotting to each European country its quota of surviving Romanoffs, we attempted to follow the line of least resistance. This was a grave mistake, as we understood later on, but at the time we knew no better.

Grand Duke Boris used to be friendly with the King of Spain, so he went to Madrid. His brother Andrew thought he was exceedingly popular on the French Riviera, so Riviera it was to be. Their elder brother Cyril followed his wife to Rumania, the country of the latter's sister, the present Dowager-Queen Marie.

My own family, though invited to move in its entirety to London, disclosed a surprising amount of common sense by splitting itself into two groups: my mother-in-law, my wife and the younger children accepted the hospitality of my aunt Dowager-Queen Alexandra; while my daughter,

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her husband Prince Yousoupoff, and my two elder sons settled in Rome.

Following the precedent established by these movements, Grand Duchess Marie and her brother Dimitry should have gone to Greece, the country of their late mother, and the Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter (married to the two sisters of the Queen of Italy, all three Montenegrin princesses) should have shown a preference for either Italy or Montenegro. Unfortunately, a diminutive monkey did away with King Alexander of Greece; the Allies dealt in practically the same manner with Montenegro; and as for Italy, that country was going through the convulsions of the pre-Mussolini period. Thus it happened that Marie and Dimitry had to divide their time between Paris and London, while Nicholas and Peter retired to a peaceful house on the French Riviera.

The years to come caused a considerable amount of shuffling and reshuffling, but this is how the Romanoffs were "laid out" in the early 1920's.

3

Needless to say, none of us possessed any cash to speak of. My son-in-law Prince Yousoupoff was considered the nabob of the lot, having managed to rescue from Russia two of his numerous Rembrandts, which were eventually sold for the sum of four hundred and fifty thousand dol-

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lars to Mr. Joseph Widener of Philadelphia. Before the revolution, Yousoupoff's annual income ran well into eight figures, which fact is sufficient in itself to explain the short duration of the Rembrandt proceeds.

We had some jewelry, each one of us. In any other hands it would have been equivalent to the possession of a fair-sized fortune. In our case it led to a series of childish attempts at salesmanship and shrewdness. Not daring to appear personally in the shops we had been patronizing for generations, we hired the services of "third parties." The jewelers roared and said: "This is a very nice string of pearls, indeed. It was sold to Grand Duchess Xenia of Russia some twenty-five years ago. As a museum piece it represents a great value. As a piece of merchandise it has practically none. Now that the Romanoffs, the Hapsburgs and the Hohenzollerns are no more, who could possibly buy it?"

They argued well and acted wisely. In less than a week the news of our "peddling the stones" had become known to every dealer in Paris, Amsterdam, London and New York, and the prices took a slide. At the end we felt immensely happy to be able to get slightly less than twenty percent of what we ourselves had paid twenty-five years ago. I remember that day. It was my duty to call a meeting of the family and to announce the results. My wife thought we were now safely set for the next five years, and decided to move to Copenhagen. I claimed that, if prop-

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erly invested, the money would surely take us right into the 1930's. We were wrong, both of us. We lived off Xenia's pearls for just three years, to a minute. But move to Copenhagen she did. She had seen much of London by that time, and hoped that the modest, almost provincial life led by the royal family of Denmark would provide a better background for the upbringing of our sons. She adored King George and liked the younger Windsors, but standing at the helm of the greatest empire in the world, they were naturally obliged to preserve that atmosphere of ancient splendor which impresses the layman but is thoroughly unbearable to a mind loaded with the memories of a tragic past. By going to Copenhagen, to be the guests of the tall and silent Glücksbergs, my wife and sons were virtually retiring to a farm, in quest of simple surroundings and "healthy" country air. The final decision rested with my mother-in-law. I feared that this sudden return to the country she had left fifty-five years ago to become the Empress of Russia might give her a shock, possibly endanger her life. But she had determined to go.

"I shall die in Hvidore," the Dowager-Empress said firmly, and that silenced me. *Hvidore* was the name of the spacious house built by her in the 1890's to serve as headquarters for our spring reunions in Denmark. It stood right on the sea. Sitting in her sternly furnished drawing room, the old lady could watch the ships going in the direction of Russia. Everything in and around the house bore

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witness to the visits of her late husband Emperor Alexander III. His favorite easy-chair in the library, the deck of cards used by him for the game of "wolf," his admiral's cap on the table, his hunting trophies on the wall. . . . Whenever he came to Copenhagen, two giant Cossacks would take their posts at the entrance gates; and much to my amazement I saw them again when bidding good-by to my mother-in-law at the station in London. For all I know, they might have been the sons or even the grandsons of my father-in-law's guards, but in any event the old lady was going to have her two towering broad-shouldered Cossacks at the entrance gates of Hvidore.

"It seems like the old days," I remarked to her laughingly.

"You mean the Cossacks," she replied casually. "Well, my dear, what would you? I cannot leave these poor men stranded here in London."

I nodded. Her cult of Emperor Alexander III was not a subject to be discussed at a railroad station.

4

Always a maverick, I refused to admit that I could do nothing at all except live on the largesse of my reigning relatives. I saw them often, but preferred to remain a resident of Paris.

Each time I went to London, Rome or Copenhagen, I

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came back with the feeling of having wasted so much time. Taught by exile to discuss all subjects freely and without mental reservations, I loathed to employ my old battery of tricks and recur to hypocrisy at the mention of this or that particularly unpleasant topic. There were plenty of them: the Indian problem in England, the Fascist policies in Italy, the advisability of trade relations with the Soviets in Denmark. It so happened that almost invariably I found myself in sharp disagreement with the viewpoints accepted by my "affectionate cousins," which meant that our conversation had to be limited to "neutral" subjects. This in turn bored me. I began to notice that royalty, when left to its own devices and temporarily relieved of the pressure of office, provides exceedingly poor company. The constant talk about Prince So-and-so not wishing to marry Princess So-and-so failed to excite me, because both the stubborn bridegroom and the overanxious bride seemed to be people of small importance.

I wished them well, but the tiresome repetition of their names made me think I could still catch the night train for Paris. . . .

5

The conversation at the table of the average European sovereign compares quite favorably with that one hears in the house of a powerful Wall Street banker but it is far less entertaining than that at a dinner party in a speakeasy

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de luxe in the East Fifties. It is free of grandiloquence but it lacks in brilliance.

Less opinionated than their transatlantic counterparts and by far less conscious of their own importance, the Kings and Queens of the Old World like to eat their food without the seasoning of idolatry.

I talk of food and luncheons and dinners because only at meals does a monarch relax. There are audiences to be given to the arriving and the departing ambassadors, there are daily cornerstones to be laid, there are innumerable "anniversaries" to be attended, there are expositions, agricultural and industrial shows, cattle fairs and art salons—all presumably of vital importance. Even as thoroughly dethroned a King as Victor Emmanuel of Italy can rarely spend an afternoon in the circle of his immediate family.

Hard and relentless is the royal routine and its influence on the characters of its victims can be imagined. It was with a great deal of feeling that in answer to the cry of "idle rich" thrown at him by a Cockney laborer the present Prince of Wales said: "Rich? Perhaps. But, hang it all, man, not idle!"

It is only natural that once left alone with their children and relatives, the European sovereigns are not overanxious to rehearse the main events of their working day or discuss the Problems of World Importance. Ever on the lookout for a safety-valve, each has his or her favorite pastime.

If there are small children in the family, as is the case of

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the present King of Yugoslavia, the conversation is likely to center around their frolics and bright sayings. The world may end tomorrow but the youthful heir apparent of the Balkans must tell his father of the battle he staged that afternoon in the garden of the palace against the invisible armies of imaginary enemies.

Many a tension was relieved in the Castle of Balmoral in the troublesome days of the reform of the House of Lords by the late King Edward's favorite grandson "David," the present Prince of Wales. Engulfed in his thoughts, tired and weary, the King would look at his grandson and ask him, just to make conversation: "I say, David, how do you feel about the possibility of ascending the throne of your ancestors?" "It's the very devil," David would answer, and that would save the day for the guests and restore the cheerfulness of the King. . . .

It is of common knowledge that the major part of the spare time of the present sovereigns of England is being spent with their grandchildren, the sons of their daughter the Princess Royal Mary and the daughters of their second son the Duke of York. Aside from the natural fondness one cannot help but feel for these handsome, cheerful tots, it is much more refreshing to laugh at the latest exploits of the blond Princess Elizabeth than to talk of what everyone at the table is well aware of, that the Empire is passing indeed through days of the most unbelievable tension.

Each time I return to Paris, the permanent seat of my

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exile, from a visit to this or that reigning relative, my friends want me to tell them, "in strict secrecy" of course, what news I have brought and what was said in the privacy of a royal dining room. I find it difficult to make them believe that the miraculous "backhand" of William Tilden 2nd provided the main topic of conversation in a palace in Scandinavia while the qualities and the defects of the Salt Lake Bridge were discussed in detail by the railroad-loving King of Belgium. "And London? What did you hear in London about the future of the pound? When do they think it will be possible to stabilize the British currency?" I blush. I sigh. I admit reluctantly that "they" talked about the Christmas presents received by Princess Elizabeth and debated whether it is really advisable to permit the girl to be photographed so often.

And the books, the modern music, the theater? Does art interest the royal conversationalists? Yes and no. All depending on the royalty in question. Needless to say, the Prince of Wales is far ahead of his immediate relatives and European cousins in so far as modern arts are concerned. An inveterate first-nighter, not only is he invariably well posted on the "latest hits" but he is able to discuss with a great degree of technical precision the orchestration methods of Paul Whiteman and the difference between the jazz of Tin-Pan Alley and the original jazz of the cotton plantations. The Spanish Revolution has removed his only "rival" in the ranks of royalty. Up to the spring of 1931

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it was an open question whether the Happy Prince of York House or King Alfonso of Spain was the greater expert on all things modern. The taste of the other members of the British Royal Family seems to be somewhat old-fashioned against the background formed by the ideas of the Heir Apparent. Kipling and Hardy in literature, Beethoven and Wagner in music, still dominate the artistic interests of the King and the rest of his family. In coming out, publicly and openly, against what he called the "over-sexed" literature of our times, Prince George acted as a spokesman for himself, his parents and his two brothers, the Duke of York and the Duke of Gloucester, but hardly for the Prince of Wales. The latter is well aware of the existence of Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner and their British followers and would be most unlikely to class their books as just "oversexed" literature.

I sincerely regret the present temporary retirement of Mr. Alphonse Capone. There was a subject that never failed to amuse and attract the glorified prisoners of the European palaces! While not every one of them was as well acquainted with the rich ramifications of that gentleman's career as King Alfonso of Spain (he reproached me for not knowing the exact nature of the relations between Mr. Capone and Mr. "Legs" Diamond), a guest who had just returned from America was always certain to please his royal hosts with the recital of this or that latest episode in the Capone epic. I must confess that during my sojourn

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in Florida I spared no effort in getting the exact description of Capone's island from the natives because I knew these data would be highly appreciated back in Europe, around the dinner tables laden with worries and badly in need of a mental escape.

6

Salary or no salary, I wished to do something to fill my time. It was depressing to get up in the morning and have no program for the day, except to attend a luncheon, a tea or a dinner. Other grand dukes, being accustomed to that sort of complacent existence in St. Petersburg, were much better trained for their present idleness. As for myself, from the age of sixteen to the moment of the Revolution I had always been occupied with constructive work. I commanded the fleet; I ran the merchant marine; I built airplanes; but whatever my post happened to be, it had kept me busy from eight in the morning until seven at night.

I wanted to land a job; so I called on my friends, the bankers and shipbuilders. They laughed. The very idea of hiring a grand duke struck them as a ridiculous notion. They told me not to worry. They reminded me of the existence of that law in England according to which a man is declared legally dead ten years after his disappearance.

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"So what?" I asked in puzzlement.

"Simply this: that in another five years your wife and your sister-in-law will enter into possession of the late Czar's millions in the Bank of England."

I swore. No matter how often I had explained to my friends that not a farthing was left by the Czar either in England or anywhere else abroad, they still persisted in repeating that silly story of the Romanoffs' twenty million pounds.

Finally I managed to meet a man who was willing to take me seriously.

"You want a job," he said pensively. "That I can readily understand. But what are your qualifications? What can you do?"

I sighed a sigh of relief and proceeded to describe my talents. I mentioned my administrative experience, my theoretical and practical knowledge of everything that pertained to ships and shipbuilding, my wealth of languages. When I finished, he shook his head sadly.

"I am afraid," he said, "that you are going to find it rather difficult to sell these qualifications of yours. Your administrative experience might be used by an empire, but where are the empires? The steamship companies are losing money steadily, and would not even dream of building additional craft. As for languages, permit me to be frank and brutal: you are entirely too old to become a teller in our foreign department, and I do not imagine that you

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would care to be hired as a secretary by a traveling millionaire. I may be mistaken, of course, but that's how it looks to me."

7

He was not mistaken. The experiences of my cousins, nephews and nieces upheld his wisdom.

There was a young Grand Duchess who fancied she could make her living as a dressmaker in London. She rented a small flat and began designing her own fashions. People came in droves, looked at her models and said that she was a "real sport," a "truly brave little woman." While they themselves were not in the market for new dresses just then, they felt certain that they would be able to recommend the industrious Grand Duchess to their numerous friends. Weeks went by. The rent had to be paid. The adorable, cute models remained unsold. Something had to be done right away. The Grand Duchess swallowed her pride and confided her difficulties to a member of the royal family. She hated to do it, but was immensely relieved to hear that aid would be forthcoming at once. Next morning a gold-braided messenger rang her bell. A letter for Her Imperial Highness. The envelope was thick and sealed. Its appearance suggested money. "Lord be praised!" said the Grand Duchess, and opened it with trembling hands. There is no end to the variety of ways in which an order can be issued to a bank for the payment of a sum of

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money, and at first she thought that the three sheets of vellum paper contained instructions to be followed by her. She read the letter carefully. She saw names, names, names: twenty-four names of the ladies who would be likely to become her clients.

Then there was a young Grand Duke who came to the conclusion that the choice of one's profession should be based on one's past performances as an amateur. His mind drifted toward the city of Rheims, with its miles of cellars laden with champagne. "The cursed stuff cost me so much money before," said the young Grand Duke, "that surely it ought to support me now. With all due modesty, I do maintain that I know more about the vintages of champagne than even the Widow Cliquot herself." So he went to Rheims and spent a whole week in the profound business of tasting the various vintages. He believed that none but the very best deserved the services of an Imperial super-salesman. The gargling and the smacking over, he chose a well-known brand and signed an agreement with its manufacturers. Then he left for the "road," rather pleased with his own determination.

In the words of the Soviets: "He who does not work shall not eat." The young Grand Duke wanted to eat. In no time at all he reached the address of his first prospective customer, a wholesale dealer and a former caterer to the Imperial Court of Russia. Their mutual delight at seeing each other can be easily understood. They talked of the

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good old days of the three champagne-loving empires. They became emotional. They drank a bottle of "extra-special" vintage. The dealer said that wine of such quality was not obtainable any more in Rheims, for either love or money. The Grand Duke smiled and produced his portfolio. He thought he could easily oblige his amiable host by selling him a thousand dozen of champagne of even higher standard, at a price that would shame the catalogues of all competing houses. The dealer opened his mouth wide. He wanted to say something, but the young Grand Duke was not to be outtalked. The very last word was, however, the dealer's. He said "No."

"Poor France—poor champagne!" he exclaimed dejectedly. "If even the Russian Grand Dukes must sell it, who the devil can buy it?"

Right then and there the noble industry lost its star salesman.

8

Having tried their hand at a score of professions, stochastically but unsuccessfully, my male relatives must have reverted to the original type, because quite early in the 1920's there appeared among them three pretenders to the non-existent throne of Russia.

The first one—my nephew Cyril—acted within his rights, being the legitimate successor to Crown and Czar-dom.

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The other two—my cousin Nicholas and my nephew Dimitry—fell victims to the boundless enthusiasm of their supporters.

The clash of their claims, staged as it had been against a background of poverty and exile, left unbiased observers thoroughly perplexed. With the Soviet Union entering upon its sixth year of existence and showing no signs of an early collapse, that three-cornered battle of the Pretenders appeared highly premature, to say the least; and yet it was taken quite seriously by the numerous Russian refugees. They ran around; they congregated; they intrigued. And true to the old Russian custom, they talked each other into a state of stupor. Ragged and pale, they flocked to the meetings of monarchists, to the stuffy and smoke-filled halls of Paris, where the relative merits of the three Grand Dukes were being discussed almost nightly by orators of prominence.

One heard lengthy quotations from the fundamental laws of the Russian Empire confirming the inalienable rights of Cyril, recited by an elderly statesman clad in a Prince Albert coat and looking like an upright corpse held from behind by a pair of invisible hands. One listened to a much-decorated major-general shouting that the "large masses of the Russian population" were insisting on seeing Nicholas, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Armies, on the throne of his ancestors. One admired a silver-tongued lawyer from Moscow defending the rights

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of the youthful Dimitry in a manner which would have been certain to squeeze tears out of the eyes of a jury. All of it was taking place just a stone's throw from the Grands Boulevards, where the crowds of jovial Parisians sat over their long and short drinks, utterly oblivious of the importance of electing a Czar of Russia.

My political views being well and unfavorably known to the Russian monarchists, at no time during that heated campaign was my own name so much as whispered; but one peaceful December morning I woke to discover that my son Nikita had been duly elected Czar at a gathering of a "dissenting" fraction of the royalists. This news upset me. I protested vehemently. What had begun as an innocent pastime was obviously acquiring the dimensions of a tragic and questionable farce. It was none of my business how my cousins and nephews were facing the problem of readjustment, but I wanted to save my own boy from making a laughing-stock of himself. He worked in a bank, was happily married to the chum of his childhood, Countess Marie Vorontzoff, and was possessed of no ambitions whatever to compete with Grand Duke Cyril. An absurd and painful explanation ensued. I was told by the former Russian liberals converted to monarchism by financial reverses that they considered my interference an additional proof of my "drifting toward Bolshevism." Coming from anyone else, these words would have "riled" me, but thrown at me by the chatterers who were directly respon-

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sible for the downfall of the Empire, they sounded like a compliment.

9

It dawned on me that, though not a Bolshevik, I could not agree with my relatives and friends and sweepingly condemn whatever was done by the Soviets just *because* it was done by the Soviets. True enough, they had killed my three brothers, but they had likewise saved Russia from becoming a vassal state of the Allies.

One moment I hated them and wished I could lay my hands on Lenin or Trotzky but then I would hear of this or that unquestionably constructive action of the Moscow Government and would catch myself whispering: "Bravo!" Like all lukewarm Christians, I knew no way of getting rid of hatred except by submerging it in still bigger hatred. The subject for the latter was provided by the Poles.

When in the early spring of 1920 I saw the headlines of the French newspapers announcing the triumphal march of Pilsudsky through the wheat fields of southwestern Russia, something snapped inside me and I forgot that scarcely a year had passed since the assassination of my brothers. All I could think was: "The Poles are about to take Kieff! The perennial enemies of Russia are about to cut off the Empire from its western borders!" I dared not declare myself but, listening to the nonsensical chatter of

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the refugees and looking at their faces lit with smiles, with every drop of my blood I wished victory to the Red Army. It mattered not that I was a Grand Duke. I was a Russian officer who had sworn to defend the nation from its enemies. I was a grandson of the man who had threatened to plow up the streets of Warsaw should the Poles once more dare disrupt the unity of his Empire. A seventy-two-year-old phrase of this same ancestor suddenly came to my mind. Across the report describing the "appalling actions" of a former Russian artillery officer, Bakunin, who had led the mob of German revolutionaries in an attack against a fortress in Saxony, Emperor Nicholas I wrote in two-inch letters: "Hurrah for our artillerymen!"

The similarity of our reactions struck me forcibly. That is how I felt when the red warrior Budenny smashed the legions of Pilsudsky and chased them all the way back to Warsaw. This time the compliments were due to the Russian cavalymen but otherwise not much had changed since the days of my grandfather.

"But you seem to forget," said my faithful secretary, "that among other things the victory of Budenny means the end to the hopes of the White Army in the Crimea."

Correct as was his remark, it failed to shatter my convictions. It was clear to me then, in the eventful summer of 1920, as it is now in the quieter days of 1933, that in scoring a decisive victory over the Poles the Soviet Government had done what any truly national government would

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have been obliged to do. However ironical it might appear that the Unity of the Russian State had to be defended by the members of the Third Internationale, the fact remains that from that day on the Soviets were forced to pursue a purely national policy which happens to be the age-old policy introduced by Ivan the Terrible, crystallized by Peter the Great and brought to a climax by Nicholas I: To defend the borders of the State at all cost and step by step to fight toward the natural frontier in the west! I feel certain that my sons will live to see the day when not only the nonsense of the independent Baltic republics will be brought to an end but Bessarabia and Poland will be reconquered by Russia and a considerable remapping of the frontier will take place in the Far East.

Back in the 1920's I dared not look that far. Then I was preoccupied with a rather personal problem. I saw the Soviets emerge with flying colors out of a protracted civil war. I heard them talk less and less of what used to interest their early prophets in the halcyon days of the Café des Lilas and more and more of what had always been vital to the bulk of the Russian nation. And I asked myself with as much sincerity as could be expected from a man who had lost a considerable fortune and had witnessed the extermination of the majority of his kin: "Could I, a product of an Empire, an individual raised to believe in the impeccability of the State, still continue to denounce the present rulers of Russia?"

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The answer was "yes" and "no." Mr. Alexander Romanoff shouted "yes." Grand Duke Alexander said "no." The former felt distinctly bitter. He loved his flourishing estates in the Crimea and in the Caucasus. He craved to walk once more into the study of his palace in St. Petersburg where rows upon rows of shelves were burdened with the leather-bound volumes of the history of the navy and where he could spend an adventurous evening caressing his precious ancient Greek coins and thinking of the years it took him to find them.

Fortunately for the Grand Duke, there always existed a divide between him and Mr. Romanoff. A bearer of a resplendent title, he knew that he and his like were not supposed to possess intelligence or exercise imagination, and thus in solving his present predicament he did not hesitate, he was in fact obliged to rely upon his collection of traditions, platitudinous in their nature but surprisingly efficient in their decisiveness. Loyalty to his country. The example of his ancestors. The advice of his peers. To remain loyal to Russia and to follow the example of the early Romanoffs who had never thought themselves bigger than their Empire meant to admit that the Soviet Government should be helped and not hindered in its experiment and to wish it would succeed where the Romanoffs had failed.

There remained the advice of my peers. With one single exception, they all thought I was crazy. Unbelievable though it may seem, I found sympathy and support in one

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European sovereign known for the shrewdness of his political judgment.

"If put in my position," I asked him point-blank, "would you permit your personal bitterness and thirst for revenge to obstruct your view of the future of your country?"

The question interested him. He weighed it gravely and proposed that I should change its phrasing.

"Let us put it in a different way," he said as if he were addressing a council of ministers. "What is thicker, blood or what I call 'imperial substance'? What is more precious—the lives of our relatives or the continuous progress of the idea of empire? My question is an answer to yours. If what you loved in Russia was limited to the boundaries of your family, then you can never forgive the Soviets. But if you have spent your life as I am spending mine, hoping and wishing for the preservation of the Empire, be it under its present banner or under the red flag of a triumphant revolution, then why hesitate? Why not have sufficient courage to admit the achievements of those who replaced you?"

10

And so three years passed, years of extended traveling and little achievement, the three sabbatical years lived by us off Xenia's pearls.

The coming of 1924 brought a rude awakening. With

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Rembrandts and jewels exchanged for room and board and railroad tickets, once more we said that we must "do something" and once more we did not know what we really could do.

The word "America" dominated our conversation. One of my sons succeeded in landing a job in the National City Bank of New York, and his enthusiastic letters provided the only bright spot on our otherwise pitch-dark horizon. I must admit I envied him and wished we could swap our respective positions. Grand Duchess Victoria, the wife of Grand Duke Cyril, who had spent that winter in New York, spared no superlatives in describing the attractiveness of the social life in Manhattan. According to her, we should all have moved to Park Avenue. That was fine; but I knew Park Avenue. It was a gorgeous street when one was going up. I feared it would look horrible on the way down. Not that I lacked invitations, but the idea of going to America as a nonpaying guest of my old friends was distasteful. It clashed with what was left of my pride, and I decided to stay in Paris waiting for some minor miracle of an indefinite nature. Bad as it was, I hoped that by now we all had learned our lesson and would be willing to forget that we had ever lived in Russia. . . .

Then came a letter from Copenhagen. I shall remember it till the day the archangel blows his horn.

"Christmas is nearly here," wrote the Dowager-Empress, "and there are many gifts to be distributed around the

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Hvidore, but the Department of the Imperial Estates has not forwarded my check as yet. I cannot imagine what the nature of this strange delay could possibly be."

I rubbed my eyes, looked at the date and gasped. On December 5, 1924, nearly eight years after the downfall of Czardom, my mother-in-law was still expecting to receive her check from the Department of the Russian Imperial Estates! Standing on the threshold of eighty, and having outlived four emperors of Russia, she flatly refused to recognize the new order of things. She knew that her sister, the Dowager-Queen Alexandra of England, was being treated with the adoration of yore, and she saw no reason why she, Empress of an even greater empire, should be subjected to the inconveniences of exile. It would have been utterly useless to try to explain to her that the very building in St. Petersburg which had housed the much-lamented Department was now occupied by a club of Communist youth. So I wrote a check for all I could, and mailed it to Copenhagen, together with my fervent hopes that Christmas would be exceedingly merry and the coming 1925 better, oh, so much better, than 1924 had turned out to be. I meant it, too. Were the coming year to prove still worse than the past one, there would have been no 1926 at all, so far as we were concerned.



CHAPTER SEVEN

CYRIL AND HIS INVISIBLE EMPIRE

I

HE moved the Capital of Russia to the village of St.-Briac on the rocky coast of Brittany and there, in the solitude of his study on the ground floor of a none-too-prepossessing country house, he conducts the affairs of his invisible Empire every day, from nine to six.

According to the local police, who are keeping a diligent check on each and every foreigner residing in their district, he is "the former Grand Duke Cyril of Russia admitted to France on a visa authorizing a stay of an indefinite duration."

According to some five hundred thousand exiled Russian monarchists who are making their precarious living in thirty-odd countries, east and west of Suez, he is "Emperor Cyril I of All the Russias," the legitimate successor to the throne of the Romanoffs relinquished by his cousin Czar Nicholas II on March 15, 1917.

The divergence between these two viewpoints, though vast and obvious, does not create too great a commotion in the learned circles of constitutional lawyers for the very

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good reason that neither the forces of the St.-Briac police nor the enthusiasm of the loyal Russian emigrants can sway the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics from its clearly charted course. Up to the moment of this writing, speaking solely in terms of guns and bayonets, there appears to be hardly any chance at all for the ultimate triumph of Grand Duke Cyril, but then, as usual, the last word belongs to that faithful friend and reliable comforter of all pretenders—History. History that teaches us that in geometry only is a straight line the shortest distance between two points, never in the life of nations, never in the sequence of revolutions and counter-revolutions. History that presents us with the instructive tale about a ragged middle-aged refugee who for twenty-three lean years led a life of near-starvation and wound up by becoming King Louis XVIII of France. History that reminds us of the amazing exploits of another Frenchman, a young Parisian of no particular talents, who talked his way from the terraces of the sidewalk cafés into the Tuileries Palace, to be known to posterity as Emperor Napoleon III. History that unearths in its files the names of Charles II of England, Louis-Philippe of France and Ferdinand VII of Spain—the never-say-die three who finally gained their thrones through sheer force of patience and with the valuable assistance of “charge accounts” with friendly grocers and trusting innkeepers. History that fully recognizes the present indisputable power of Stalin but at the same time

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points out the fact that once upon a time there cropped up a fierce little Corsican by the name of Bonaparte.

There is no end to the pranks of History, and that is why, when people of supposed wisdom ask me in tones of civic indignation, "What have you to say of the behavior of your nephew Cyril? Don't you consider it highly ridiculous, this idea of his posing as the Czar of All the Russias?" I invariably answer, not without a shade of flourish: "I do not. I believe in History. I have to. I am a Grand Duke myself, don't you see? . . . I have lived long enough to realize that many a thing ridiculous today will be labeled as a most admirable example of grit, maybe not later than tomorrow. . . ."

2

But "pose" as the Czar he does. He even acts it. He issues Orders, bestows Monarchial Thanks, signs Promotions and addresses Messages on policies to be followed by his supporters.

His is a life of sustained pathos because the business of being a Czar, while highly overrated at best, is nothing short of a nightmare when one is obliged to rule over an Empire that is no more, with one's subjects driving taxis in Paris, serving as waiters in Berlin, dancing in the picture houses on Broadway, providing atmosphere in Hollywood, unloading coal in Montevideo or dying for Good Old

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China in the shattered suburbs of Shanghai. The job of running the polyglot Austro-Hungarian Empire of yore was a sinecure indeed in comparison with the present task of Grand Duke Cyril.

Under the circumstances his sovereignty has to be enforced solely by mail. Not that he believes the pen is mightier than the sword, but the thing is that he has no sword.

Each morning, the robust sunburned postman of the village of St.-Briac appears on the threshold of the improvised Imperial Palace, puffing and panting under the weight of batches of letters which carry the stamps of almost every country under the sun. The foreign representatives of the Shadow Emperor of Russia keep him posted daily on the physical welfare and the morale of his far-away subjects, although they would be the first to admit that it would take a super-Moses to solve the infinitely involved problems of the Russian exiles.

He sits and reads. His reading matter is a lesson in geography and a study in the psychology of human bondage.

Russians, Russians and Russians . . . Russians all over the world! Dreaming sages and scheming cranks, heart-broken heroes and unabashed cowards, candidates for the Hall of Fame and full-fledged patients of Dr. Sigmund Freud.

It seems that the red agitators working in the Balkans

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have made considerable headway among the Russian refugees in Yugoslavia and that nothing less than a "Personal Letter from His Majesty" could save the situation at this dangerous moment. . . .

This sets Grand Duke Cyril thinking. Life is strange. Yugoslavia—a country liberated by his grandfather, a land drenched with the blood of two generations of Russian soldiers. Who could ever have expected that it would survive its benefactors of the House of the Romanoffs?

He has no time to think too long for there is a letter from New York marked "extremely important." The crisis of employment continues unabated in the United States and "a word or two of Monarchial Encouragement would be greatly appreciated by the impoverished Russian colony in Harlem."

Harlem. Jazz. Wide-checked suits and flaming ties. Synthetic gin and synthetic vice. And the Russians awaiting a word or two of Monarchial Encouragement! How absurd, how tragically and infinitely absurd.

The next letter takes him to China. The War Lords are continuing their efforts to draft the services of the former Russian officers in Manchuria and the latter are looking in the direction of St.-Briac for advice and guidance. . . .

And so it goes. Somehow his loyal subjects possess an uncanny talent for planting themselves in countries which immediately thereafter are hit by revolutions and wars.

There is that group of Cossacks who but recently settled

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on the border between Bolivia and Paraguay and who are now obliged to choose between returning to Europe or fighting for a totally alien cause.

There is that brave General in India who is wondering whether it is "dignified and honorable" for a former Commander of an Imperial Army to protect a Rajah against the latter's revolting subjects.

And there is that brilliant cavalryman in Chile, a whole-hearted royalist if ever there was one, who has suddenly discovered the socialistic tendencies of the government that is employing him. . . .

Then comes a batch of complaints. The passing of the last eighteen years has failed to impress their authors. Their clocks stopped on July 31, 1914.

A former Supreme Court Justice of Moscow—he is still using his full title although he is working at present as a factory hand in Canada—wants it to be distinctly understood in St.-Briac that a young Russian employed in a bakery in Montreal is a very dangerous radical who should not be permitted to return to Russia when the monarchy is restored.

A former Captain of the Guards—now a dishwasher in a self-service cafeteria somewhere in the Middle West—feels deeply hurt because his name has not been included in the latest "list of promotions." He is convinced that his age and merits entitle him to the rank of Colonel. "I happen to know," he adds with considerable resentment, "that

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several friends of mine have already been made Colonels although they left Russia as mere Lieutenants." Come what may, he wishes to be "promoted" by Grand Duke Cyril even if he is never able to wear a Colonel's epaulettes or collect the "back salary" due him since 1917.

3

Pathos intermingled with comedy and blindness goaded on by hope form the backbone of this segregated world of make-believe. Nothing is real, everything is a prop. Promotions and demotions, orders and counter-orders, citations and reprimands, promises and threats, salaries and bonuses—all is being done on a "when, if and as" basis, subject to the ultimate decision of History.

Naturally enough, a stranger visiting St.-Briac for the first time brings along a preconceived idea of what the Shadow Emperor of Russia should look like and is fully prepared to encounter a personage from Wonderland, a hero of fantastic features. No one expects to see a very tall, extremely handsome man who bears the weight of his middle fifties with a quiet dignity seldom observed in the case of an actual occupant of a throne. So thoroughly czar-like is the appearance of Grand Duke Cyril that when he goes out for his morning stroll through St.-Briac it seems as though a squadron of Chevalier-Guards, with their helmets surmounted by the imperial double-headed eagles,

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should line the dusty and unpaved streets of that fishermen's village.

The stranger, considerably taken aback, glares at the Grand Duke and thinks: What is the matter with this man? Why is he playing this comedy? Is he a maniac, a superannuated visionary, a pitiful somnambulist?

The answer is "no." In fact, the explanation of the whole mystery is quite simple. It so happens that Grand Duke Cyril is the first in the line of succession to the throne of Russia while I myself am fortunately the tenth. Therefore, I may write books and articles, play contract and backgammon, attend cocktail parties and greyhound races, travel and have an all-around good time but he must keep the fires of the Monarchistic Idea burning. I say "he MUST" because we both belong to a family which has for centuries maintained that nothing, not even the fear of ridicule, should interfere with the fulfillment of our duties. As Grand Duke Cyril sees it, his and his youthful son's duty consists in providing an active leadership for the Russian royalists abroad and in revising the age-worn monarchistic precepts in a manner that would make them acceptable to the Russians in Russia.

"I am working for the salvation of our country," he said to me in the course of our recent conversation. "I know enough about the cardinal laws of mechanics to understand that each forceful swing of the pendulum to the left is bound to be followed by an equally forceful

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swing to the right. It is my duty, the duty of every sensible statesman, to be prepared for the moment of that counter-swing and to do all in my power to limit its scope and arrest its potential destructiveness. There is no way of accomplishing this except by creating a new set of healthy national ideals which in themselves would carry both the ability to prevent another deluge of blood and a powerful appeal to the constructive elements of our country.

"I know no parties. I am making commitments to no classes. Mine is the task of interpreting the inarticulate groans of the now disfranchised majority of the Russian people, the majority that is not permitted to send its representatives to the Soviets, the majority that is utterly tired of the revolution and its so-called conquests, the majority that is clamoring for a simple life of peace and personal happiness. I am doing my duty and I am teaching my son to follow in my steps."

He talks well, in the tones of a wisely disillusioned Heir Apparent who recognizes that the nineteenth century has long since been dead in Russia, and everywhere else for that matter. His words are sonorous and his phrases fluent, but how does one go about creating a "new set of healthy national ideals" while closeted in the village of St.-Briac? How does one distinguish between the "constructive" and the "destructive" elements of modern Russian life from the distance of the fourteen hundred miles that separate

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the rugged coast of Brittany from the land of huge red flags and pale anæmic faces?

Nothing in the puzzling attitude of Grand Duke Cyril will be clear to outsiders unless the story of his life is told, for his is the case of a Pretender possessed with the feeling of self-identification with the Men of Destiny.

4

The eldest son of my cousin Vladimir and a nephew of Emperor Alexander III, he spent his youth as a typical Grand Duke. He tipped lavishly, he traveled often, he danced well. Built like an Apollo, kind-hearted and gay, he inherited a great deal of money from his father—a highly pleasing combination of social virtues which made him immensely popular and which left nothing to be desired even by the fastidious maître d'hôtel of the Ritz in Paris.

We, the elders of the clan, felt slightly jealous of his endowments. Wherever we went we met people who expected us to measure up to the standards of handsomeness and generosity established by our nephew Cyril.

The idol of all women and the friend of most of the men, he ruled over the "younger set" in St. Petersburg, resplendent in his uniform of the Sailors Regiment of the Imperial Guard, benevolent and towering. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out, he asked to be sent into action, it being the proper thing for a twenty-six-year-old

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Grand Duke to do. He was not afraid of death though he naturally hoped to return and find his pleasant life and friends just where he had left them.

He went through the war with a smile, wrote letters, received answers, and it took a Japanese torpedo to put an end to this complacent existence. One day—it happened in the spring of 1905 when he was an officer aboard H.I.M.S. *Petropavlovsk*—he found himself clinging to the remnants of a lifeboat, burned about the face, stunned and half-conscious. Out of eight hundred officers and men just five, Grand Duke Cyril among them, survived the explosion.

No one can face death and remain unchanged. No one can be miraculously saved and escape conversion to fatalism. It never dawned on the Society that turned out in full force to celebrate the home-coming of their idol that the carefree young Grand Duke they had known and loved did go down on the *Petropavlovsk* and that a vastly different man was returning to St. Petersburg. They noticed his silence but they attributed it to the after-effects of the shock. He himself knew better. The memory of that gray day on the Pacific was to stay with him for years to come, an omen of Destiny and the assurance of a Great Future. Why otherwise should he have survived while all the others perished?

As though to strengthen Grand Duke Cyril's belief in his Star, he was given a second chance to taste the thrills

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and the shocks of a miraculous escape, fourteen years after the sinking of the *Petropavlovsk*. This time he had his expectant wife and his little daughter to think of. In the winter of 1919 the three of them crossed the frozen Gulf of Finland afoot, hotly pursued by the Bolshevik patrols and leaving behind the city where four members of our family had been shot but a few weeks before. Had the red pursuers taken a better aim or had there been a hundred feet more to run, the village of St.-Briac would have lost its opportunity of landing on the pages of Russian history.

5

I have never come across a superstition that has not proven helpful on at least one occasion: the more I learn about the Sound Realistic Policies of Democracy, the less I am inclined to depreciate the Lucky Star of my nephew Cyril. In fact, it is not necessary to be a Grand Duke or a royalist to realize the enviable strength of a man who believes in his divine destiny.

For one thing, this unshakable faith in the certainty of his ultimate triumph helps to keep both the Shadow Emperor and his invisible Empire out of all sorts of mischief. Firmly convinced that his hour shall strike sooner or later, he stays aloof from all foolish attempts at organizing a premature uprising in Russia and is perfectly satisfied to sit in his study working on a "new set of healthy national

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ideals." Whatever the practical value of the latter might be, there is no doubt that Grand Duke Cyril exercises a highly beneficial influence on the shabby cohorts of his destitute supporters. To them he symbolizes the possibility of a better future, of a different Russia where they will be able to apply their newly acquired knowledge of various crafts and enjoy the fruits of their present hard labors. Saddening as it is to read a letter from a dishwasher who wants to be made a Colonel, chances are that its author would long since have surrendered to despair had it not been for his implicit confidence in the miracle-working talents of his Sovereign in St.-Briac.

And so the years roll by: the world goes on toward radical changes and new forms, but the five hundred thousand Russian exiled monarchists continue along their own way which may eventually bring them either into the Promised Land or into a blind alley. They are willing to wait, and so is their Emperor.

The days of Brittany are long and peaceful. Everybody gets up at sunrise, and at seven o'clock in the morning she whom her admirers address as "Your Imperial Majesty" can be found working in the garden. It is a large and impressive garden. Something in its assortment of flowers is vaguely suggestive of the English countryside, which is quite understandable because the wife of Grand Duke Cyril happens to be "Ducky," the second of the four beautiful daughters of Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, the other

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three being known today as the Dowager-Queen Marie of Rumania, the Princess Hohenlohe-Langenburg and the Infanta Beatrice of Spain. Royal bearing and poise are to be expected from the grand-daughters of Queen Victoria but when these four gather in the sunlit villa of St.-Briac it looks as if the matter-of-fact twentieth century had suddenly receded into the glamorous days of the First Empress of India. Having spent their lives in four different but equally tumultuous countries of Europe, they have seen a lot and have taken part in more than one tragedy. They speak to each other in English which provides excellent practice for Princess Kira and Prince Vladimir, the two children of Grand Duke Cyril. It would be still more beneficial to the two youngsters were it possible to instill into their minds the total sum of wisdom and experience accumulated by their aunts and parents. As it is, the children are permitted to discover for themselves that matches burn, courtiers lie and revolutionaries shoot.

Kira is nineteen. According to the present plans she is to marry the elder son of the exiled King of Spain. Vladimir is thirteen. His mother brought him into the world immediately after escaping the bullets of the red soldiers. He is a huge and handsome boy, looking like an image of his grand-uncle Emperor Alexander III. He swims, plays tennis, drives a car and excels in other similar virtues imported to St.-Briac by his frequent guest and constant chum, Master Henry Loomis of New York.

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The tenants of St.-Briac—grown-ups and children alike—are not in a hurry to pack their baggage. Experienced masters of the art of waiting, they know that in order to preserve their mental balance they should concentrate exclusively on the day that faces them. Were they to get up in the morning and begin talking of the possibility of a sudden change in Russia, their nerves would last but a few weeks. People in their position must have a safety-valve; none is more efficient than the rigorous pursuit of a well-established routine. The routine of St.-Briac is simple. While father attends to the affairs of State, mother paints, daughter reads or works in the garden, son prepares lessons. The evenings are spent together around the dinner table, unless the presence of a few guests warrants a game of contract. Occasionally they go to Paris for a short stay to visit their friends and do their shopping. The Grand Duke is an enthusiastic golfer and, if given another twenty years or so, may yet bring his score below eighty.

I often think of them when crossing the Atlantic or watching the landscape of Florida through the window of my drawing room in the course of my annual pilgrimage South. It strikes me as being distinctly unfair that I, an older man, should live my life and go places while Grand Duke Cyril must sit and wait for the long-delayed turn of the tide. But then, I suppose, he will gain in solid rewards of History what he misses in transitory beauty of life. One cannot have both.

CHAPTER EIGHT

AN ETHIOPIAN INTERLUDE

I

THERE was a matter of forty-four years between the date of the photograph on the mantelpiece of my apartment in Paris and that of the telegram in my hands.

The daguerreotype was blurred by time and somewhat crude. It represented a warm-eyed girl of seventeen, wearing a heavy dress of silver and smiling restrainedly under the weight of a cumbersome crown of diamonds and pearls. Its inscription—gold-lettered and be-eagled—read: “H.I.H. Grand Duchess Anastasia Michailovna, daughter of H.I.H. Grand Duke Michael Nicholævich, Viceroy of the Caucasus, and bride of Frederick, Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin; taken in the city of Tiflis in the year 1879.”

The telegram was marked “urgent.” It smelled of fresh ink and had arrived but a moment before. It was dated “April 7, 1923, Eze, Alpes-Maritimes, France” and it said: “Your sister died this morning, notify hour of your arrival.”

I stood and stared—at the photograph and at the tele-

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gram. The forty-four years seemed to have passed altogether too rapidly and though my sister was sixty-one and several times a grandmother, I felt I was going to attend the funeral of the girl in the silver dress. The death of the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin mattered little. I wondered for a moment whether the French would let the Crown Princess of Germany come to Eze and join the Queen of Denmark at the grave of their mother—and then my thoughts traveled back to the old viceregal palace in Tiflis. This was the end, the end of our sturdy family and the disappearance of the last link connecting me with the great expectations of my childhood in the Caucasus. To be sure, there was still my elder brother Michael, rounding up his life in London where he had been exiled from Russia some thirty years ago, but I considered him a Britisher and I knew there could be nothing in common between me and his two English-born daughters, the Marchioness of Milford-Haven and Lady Zia Wehrner. Playmates and friends of the Prince of Wales, they were leading the carefree existence of the typical rich Londoners and the epic of the Romanoffs was used by them merely as an exciting background to accentuate their well-groomed and highly admired beauty. Nothing in them suggested Russians, none of them could have replaced my sister. Although married to a German and a lifelong favorite of International Society, she had always remained a Caucasian rebel, first and last. Her association with the

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Kaiser and the years spent in an atmosphere of sheltered flippancy failed to make her forget the mountains back of the viceregal gardens. When meeting Anastasia even after long periods of separation I had no difficulty in picking up the thread of a conversation interrupted a whole generation ago in Tiflis. We guessed each other's moods, we spoke in a language thoroughly incomprehensible to outsiders, and the glossary of terms coined by us for our own private use would have filled a thick volume. Whether I chided her for losing too much money in Monte Carlo or she in turn reprimanded me for falling a bit too often in love, she invariably treated me as Sandro the headstrong boy and the nightmare of the punctilious Masters of Ceremonies, while I continued to see in her that adorable dark-haired girl who had burst one day into my classroom, flushed with anger and short of breath, to declare that she would much rather put up with our tyrannical tutors and teachers than marry a heel-clicking German from Mecklenburg-Schwerin.

And now she was dead and was lying in state in her villa on the French Riviera, a stone's throw from the casinos where she had gambled and danced, among strangers who had known her as the last of the "very grand" Duchesses, separated from her native country by revolution and torn away from her adopted country by war.

My bags packed and the time of my departure approaching, I looked once more at the photographs, the

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chairs, the rugs and the little nothings on the tables. The apartment belonged to Anastasia who permitted me to occupy it while she herself was away from Paris. I did not expect to return there and I wanted to absorb all that reminded me of her. In Eze I was to see her dead body, here in Paris I could feel the quality of her taste and the warmth of her beauty. For the second time in my life I was bidding good-by to the nineteenth century; for the first time during my exile I lost interest in tomorrow. I was ready to walk through any door, preferably an open door.

2

The Riviera was in full bloom and the rich fragrance of the purple and white flowers filling the sunlit air of the densely packed cathedral made me overlook the usual gruesomeness of a State funeral. The clear voices of a Russian choir sang in solemn tones that rose above sorrow and, had it not been for a long row of bald-headed dignitaries, their medals shining garishly in the light thrown by tall candles, I might almost have been inclined to believe that I was witnessing a ceremony of truly Christian character. It was as it should have been at the end of an existence marked by a great deal of joy and laughter, and the moment the funeral was over I went to Monte Carlo to spend a day in my sister's favorite surroundings.

I had not visited the blessed kingdom of roulette since

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pre-war days but the sight of the massive Greek gamblers dozing under the coquet parasols of Ciro's reassured me at once: here at least things were going on as usual.

Stately mannequins of the Parisian dressmakers, wearing perhaps too heavy a load of multicolored jewelry to pass for bona fide society beauties, promenaded their blue-rib-boned Pekingeses in front of the Casino. Carefully laundered English lords were being wheeled around in their chairs discussing gout, sterling and the affairs of the Empire. And smart-looking yachts of the American multi-millionaires, squatting in the harbor below, made one dream of the far-away lands beyond the Mediterranean horizon. I openly envied the owners of those splendid yachts and thought that if placed in their position I would exercise considerably better judgment in choosing my ports of call.

Sipping a brandy-and-soda and trying not to hear the buzz of the ceaseless conversation in the café, I was busily engaged in charting an imaginary tropical cruise when the persistent smiles of my neighbor on the left made me realize that he must be someone I knew. I looked at him questioningly and half-reluctantly acknowledged his bow. His olive skin and a huge black pearl in his tie suggested an oriental dealer in antiques, and I decided that the sooner I dispelled his illusions as to my present financial position the better it would be for both of us. He got up and came to my table, wreathed in smiles and displaying several ruby-and-emerald rings on the thin long fingers of his

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dark hands. "Possibly a dealer in Indian stones," I said to myself and prepared a laconic speech.

"May I take the liberty of robbing His Imperial Highness of a few minutes of his valuable time," he began, standing in front of me in a quasi-military fashion, so thoroughly out of place in a crowded sidewalk café, and then I felt that my initial fears had been only too well founded for no one, except an oriental trader, would use that French of the courtiers of the eighteenth century.

"You may rob me of that," I answered jestingly, "for the very good reason that I have nothing else left to be robbed of. This may sound discouraging to you but such is the awful truth."

He smiled more broadly still and said something to the effect that the disappearance of the riches of the world tends to develop the wealth of gifts with which we are endowed by the Almighty.

"Quite so, my good man," I agreed whole-heartedly, "but I doubt whether the men of your profession could possibly discount checks drawn on His bank . . ."

For a moment he remained perplexed, then he smiled again.

"The men of my profession," he remarked quietly, "could not be interested in any other kind of checks."

This time I gave in.

"Have a seat," I said resignedly, "and let us try to trade tangibles for intangibles. What is it, emeralds or rubies?"

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He glanced at the tables around us and shook his head.

"I would much rather prefer to be granted an audience by Monseigneur in the privacy of his apartment."

His persistence puzzled me. He must have been the Orient's greatest salesman to possess so impressive a personality. In order to bring this strange interview to an end I explained that I had no apartment in Monte Carlo, that I was returning to Eze this very day and that there would be no sense at all in his wasting his time in following me. This seemed to sadden him. His smile disappeared and he sat silent. I hoped he would get up and leave.

"Would it be too presumptuous on my part," he suggested suddenly with an air of determination in his small black eyes, "to propose that Monseigneur should deign to call at my rooms in the Hotel de Paris?"

"Now, listen," I exclaimed impatiently. "Can't you understand that my visit to your rooms would simply mean so much time wasted to both of us? No matter how gorgeous your stones might be, I have no money to buy them with. Do I make myself clear?"

"Quite," he replied with great seriousness, "and only now I see that Monseigneur was not joking and that he had really taken me for a vendor of stones. My name is Abuna Matheos. I felt certain that Monseigneur had recognized me when he acknowledged my bow . . ."

Abuna Matheos? The name meant nothing to me but the thought of having perhaps offended a perfectly harm-

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less man made me refrain from further attempts at avoiding him.

"I am awfully sorry, Mr. Matheos," I said with as much cheerfulness as I could muster under the circumstances, "but my memory is not what it used to be. It must be quite a little time since I saw you last."

"Just twenty-one years. I had the honor of lunching in your palace in St. Petersburg in the spring of nineteen-two."

"To be sure," I nodded but wished to God I could guess at least his nationality. "Have you ever had the occasion of visiting Russia since?"

"Alas, monseigneur. The declaration of the World War caught me in Djibouti just as I was on my way to St. Petersburg to convey to His Imperial Majesty the messages of my master, the great Negus Lidy Lasso . . ."

This casual mentioning of the name of the Emperor of Abyssinia threw me into a panic because it meant that my "vendor of rubies" was in reality that venerable Ethiopian statesman whom I had personally introduced to the Czar and who was lavishly entertained by our Government. Apologies were in order but Mr. Matheos waved them aside. Now that his identity was properly established he could afford to laugh. So we both laughed on our way to the Hotel de Paris and as we passed a few acquaintances of mine I could have sworn that they suspected me of buying a ring or a rug.

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3

Our conference lasted three hours. Abuna Matheos proved to be a forceful speaker, and aside from a question asked now and then, I was only too glad to remain an utterly bewildered listener. From what I understood on that memorable afternoon in Monte Carlo—it took Mr. Matheos several more weeks to make me grasp the very involved details of his somewhat unusual proposition—I was expected by him and his master to help Abyssinia regain her rights to a certain part of the Holy Places in Jerusalem. . . . According to the Ethiopian statesman, I, and only I, was the one capable of forcing the Armenians and the Copts residing in Palestine to restore to the Abyssinian clergy the Convent Dar-es-Sultan and the two other churches adjoining the Great Church of the Holy Sepulchre. . . . To say that I was dumbfounded would be reaching the South Pole of Understatement. Not only did I know less than nothing of the interrelations between Copts, Armenians and Abyssinians in Jerusalem, but for the first time in my life I learned that the Russian Imperial Government had spent five years and over a million dollars in unearthing in Turkey the various documents containing the proof of the Ethiopian claims.

“Your Government,” explained Mr. Matheos, “suc-

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ceeded in finding even the original firman of the Caliph Omar issued in the year six-thirty-six."

This failed to impress me. I saw no reason why the money of the Russian taxpayers should have been squandered in searching for the firmans of any Caliph and I admitted this much to my dark-skinned instructor in the history of the Holy Places.

He raised his hands in despair.

"To begin with, monseigneur, it was not your taxpayers' money because every cent had been donated by your cousin Grand Duchess Elizabeth, and then do not forget that the moment Abyssinia was to come into possession of the twelve disputed plots of Holy Land, the Russian Orthodox Church was immediately to be ceded two of them for the construction of a chapel."

The lavish generosity of my cousin Ella did not surprise me: a fervent supporter of the Russian Orthodox Church, she must have taken such a great interest in the plight of the Abyssinians on account of the close similarity of our religions, while the hope of gaining a foothold in the Holy Land could have prompted her, no doubt, to spend the whole of her vast fortune. All this, however, characteristic as it was of the pious ways of my relatives, had little to do with the year 1923 and with that particular Russian Grand Duke who had come to Monte Carlo for a few hours of sunshine and rest. It is never too late to learn and I welcomed this opportunity to discover that the present rulers

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of Abyssinia claim their descent from the son born to the Queen of Sheba after her friendly visit to King Solomon, but I continued to fear that both Abuna Matheos and his Government were grossly exaggerating my influence with the perfidious Copts and Armenians in Jerusalem.

"As recently as seven years ago," I said gently, "I could have interceded on your behalf with the Armenian Patriarch in Palestine but I am afraid my voice would carry no weight with His Grace now."

Mr. Matheos got up, crossed toward the table and produced a typewritten sheet of paper.

"This," he announced solemnly, "is the English translation of the letter written in the year eighteen-fifty-two by our great Chief Ras Ali to Her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria. I would like to have Monseigneur read it."

I gladly acquiesced. It was an interesting letter:

From the Head of the Judges, Ali, the servant of God, the King of Kings, who is one in the Godhead and three in persons. May this reach the Queen of England! How are you? Are you well, equal to Heaven and Earth? I desire and expect to be in friendship with you; may you also desire my friendship. What is it that, whilst you exist, my inheritance is taken from me? Whilst every one abides in his inheritance, I am deprived of mine. Now do what is needed that I may not be deprived of my inheritance; for I have been deprived of the portion of ground belonging to Abyssinia in Jerusalem. . . . The matter is now in your hand. Send me word for whatever you want and I shall send it. . . .

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"Did the Queen try to help Ras Ali?" I asked, visualizing the quiet amusement of Queen Victoria.

"She did."

"And?"

"Even she could not make the Armenians return our possessions. . . ."

"Now you see," I said, rather elated. "And you expect an exiled Russian Grand Duke to succeed where the powerful Queen failed?"

He looked at me hesitatingly and I understood that in a true oriental fashion he was postponing to the very end the expression of what was really on his mind. I took my hat and pretended I was leaving. Only then did he decide to broach the subject.

"The documents that confirm our proofs," he began, lowering his eyes, "are at present in the hands of a former agent of the Russian Imperial Government in Constantinople."

I waited.

"This man," he continued after a long pause, "flatly refuses to surrender them to anyone not related to the last Czar. Having acted by the orders of His Majesty and on the money of the late Grand Duchess Elizabeth, he feels in duty bound to keep the documents at the disposal of his masters' heirs and assignees."

I waited. So did he. I was about to get up again when he took from the table the copy of Ras Ali's letter and

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bringing it close to me pointed with his finger at the last line which read: "Send me word for whatever you want and I shall send it." This gesture, prompted by his excessive anxiety, struck me as being a bit too crude for a suave oriental diplomat. It looked as if he expected me to demand a definite amount for each of the twelve disputed plots of the Holy Land.

"The air of Monte Carlo has affected you quite unfavorably, Mr. Matheos," I said severely, with the full intention of leaving this time. He rushed ahead of me and when we both reached the door he turned around to face me, fell on his knees, and began to talk. His meticulous French suddenly failed him and I missed most of what he said, but the sight of this bejeweled figure kneeling before a stranger in a Monte Carlo hotel made me realize the absurdity of my resentment. From what he had learned of white men he had concluded that there was always a certain price attached to their integrity; if an Imperial Government stood ready to accept its commission in plots of Holy Land, why should a mere Grand Duke take offense at the suggestion of a monetary reward for his friendly services? I patted Mr. Matheos on the shoulder and helped him to get up. His tie rearranged and his suave countenance restored, we settled in our chairs and proceeded to scheme against the Armenians.

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4

Sometimes I doubt that all this has really taken place. Were I to read of it in a book, I would write an insulting letter to the author who had dared concoct such a ludicrous tale of thoroughly fantastic adventures. But then, there is a voluminous file of my "Abyssinian papers" packed in an oversized trunk in my apartment in Paris and there is likewise a long and dry report of the learned experts registered with the League of Nations in Geneva and pigeonholed in its "Sub-commission on Mandates."

So it would appear that I am not dreaming, after all, and that as a direct result of my "friendly interference" in Constantinople the present Emperor of Abyssinia had come into possession of a number of Caliphs' firmans and Kings' letters, Patriarchs' conclusions and Grand Vizirs' decisions—all of them establishing for ever and ever the inalienable Ethiopian rights to the twelve plots of Holy Land, situated in the ancient city of Jerusalem and adjoining the Great Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The opening lines of the report presented to the League of Nations by Professor Nolde of Paris and Professor Charles de Visser of Brussels read: "Based on the documents gathered by H.I.H. Grand Duke Alexander of Russia and delivered by him to H.I.H. Taffari Mekonnen, the Heir Apparent

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to the throne of Ethiopia." The word "gathered" had been used, no doubt, by those two legal luminaries in a purely conjectural sense because, aside from my negotiations with the former agent of our Government in Constantinople, I had indulged in no "gathering" whatsoever but the term "delivered" describes correctly though rather briefly the history of the six months spent by me as the guest of Emperor Haile Silassie I of Abyssinia, then still known under the name of Ras Taffari Mekonnen.

It was an eventful and joyful day in my life of exile when I arrived in Marseilles to embark on a French steamer which was to take me as far as Port Said. I felt supremely happy at being given this providential chance to leave Europe. I remember my secretary saying, "Well, bid your farewell to the shores of France, we are now turning into the open sea," and my answering enthusiastically, "Thank God! If we could only never come back!"

I knew we were going to run straight into the season of tropical rains in Abyssinia, but what could have been worse than the intolerable annoyance of my last two months in Paris? The moment I had announced my intention of accepting Ras Taffari's invitation, my apartment had become a magnet for all sorts of maniacs, promoters and adventurers. The former owners of the caviar fisheries in Russia wanted to be taken along because they claimed they could breed caviar-bearing sturgeons in the neighborhood of the Red Sea. The ever-present heroes of science

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volunteered their time and services to study the peculiarities of the Ethiopian mosquito in order to put an end to the ravages of yellow fever. The representatives of Wall Street bankers professed an ingratiating interest in the Abyssinian claims to the Holy Places and thought they could advance the cause of the Good Old Country if promised a ninety-nine-year concession to develop the salt mines of Lake Tsana. I had never even heard of the existence of Lake Tsana, but this fact did not prevent the ambassadors of three Great Powers in Paris advising me "unofficially and strictly confidentially" that my "ambitious Tsana projects" were bound to create a long series of extremely unpleasant international complications. Someone, probably the selfsame disappointed representatives of the Wall Street bankers, spread the rumor that my trip was to be financed by a "powerful firm in New York" and it looked for a while as though the government of France might ask me to submit a written explanation of the motives of my voyage. In vain did I display the copy of the Caliph Omar's firman. In vain did I talk of the illegal Armenian-Copt occupation of the Convent Dar-es-Sultan. So long as I persisted in disclaiming any designs on the salt mines of Lake Tsana, I was a schemer, a manipulator and a Man-To-Be-Watched. The climax of absurdity was reached on the eve of my departure when a wealthy Duke, a distant relative of mine, asked me point-blank whether it would be still possible for me to accept

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the offer of his group. It seems they wanted to construct a mammoth dam and use the water of the same fatal Lake Tsana for the purpose of increasing the irrigated area in the Sudan on which cotton could be grown for the mills of Lancashire. The Abyssinians were Christians and so were the members of the wealthy Duke's group.

5

The voyage was long and the heat oppressive, and the Imperial Train sent to meet me in Djibouti stopped each day at sunset for fear of the desert bandits, but the thought of having finally escaped the jackals of Paris made the roar of African lions almost endearing.

At the station of Addis Ababa I was met with honors not accorded me since 1917. The music played, the soldiers presented arms and the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, an elderly chap with cunning eyes and a flashing smile, greeted me in French and said I must be prepared for a thrilling surprise, a phrase which filled the heart of my secretary with dire misgivings because he hated Africa and wanted none of its surprises. A firm believer in modern medical science, he had brought with him a trunkload of various pills supposed to protect us against all diseases, including the very air of Addis Ababa, and as we passed along the line of the guard of honor I noticed him swallowing a couple of his pills. The next moment we heard

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the opening bars of an old Russian Military March and faced a group of our own compatriots. I was taken aback and the Prime Minister laughed contentedly.

"There are seventy-five of them," he explained with a shade of pride, "building our highways and serving in our army. Your people are no newcomers to Abyssinia. In fact it was a Russian tutor who supervised the education of our former Emperor Lidy Lasso."

"Which accounts, no doubt, for the fact of Lidy Lasso's inability to keep his throne," my secretary added under his breath, and I bit my lip hard.

Outside of the station and on our way to the palace we witnessed what was touchingly planned to represent scenes of "genuine enthusiasm." The crowds shouted and about a hundred horsemen galloped behind our car. Hardly a score of them could have pronounced my name or cared about my exalted person, but then orders are orders; be it in Addis Ababa or in Paris, an organized government would do well not to stake its reputation for hospitality on the spontaneous response of the population. This sort of thing has been going on for centuries, and I did not consider myself too great a hypocrite when, shaking hands with Ras Taffari a few minutes later, I thanked him for the extraordinary kindness of his subjects.

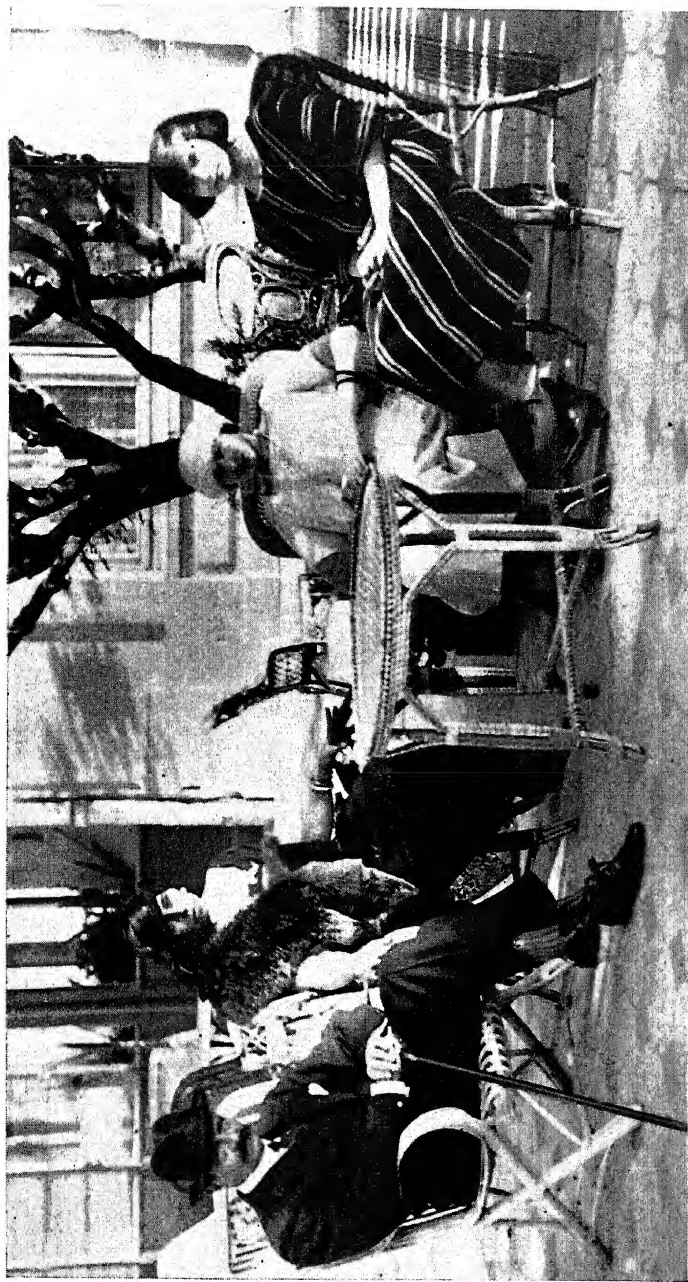
"I shall never forget this beautiful reception in Addis Ababa," I promised in my sincerest pre-war tones, wondering how it happened that the seven years of revolution

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and exile had not entirely deprived me of my talent to lie with a straight face.

"May the Almighty be praised for bringing a guest of such distinction to the land of his beloved children," said Ras Taffari and bowed gravely. He spoke smoothly and possessed a pronounced grace of movement totally unexpected in a shortish man of his sturdy physique. Watching his piercing eyes and shining white teeth, I thought of the story told me in Djibouti: In order to justify his seizure of the throne, Ras Taffari had flooded the country with a tricky composite photograph of his predecessor which represented the head of Lidy Lasso attached to the body of a Mussulman engaged in the reading of the Koran. . . . According to the same story, on having taken the hapless Lidy Lasso prisoner, he knelt in front of him and praised his venerable ancestors and only then issued orders to put the defeated Emperor in chains.

In the course of this first meeting of ours and during the following three months not a word was said about the real purpose of my visit. I was Ras Taffari's guest, a "Christian paying a friendly call on another Christian," and as such I was given the full measure of Imperial Ethiopian Hospitality. I entered the Church of Stephanos and inspected the mummified bodies of the glorious Emperors of Abyssinia; I saw the much-discussed Lake Tsana, which turned out to be an inland sea about sixty miles long and twenty-five miles wide; I drove in His Majesty's motor-



International News Photo

GRAND DUKE CYRIL AND HIS FAMILY

"He moved the Capital of Russia to the village of St. Briac on the rocky coast of Brittany. . . ."



York Cottage,
Sandringham,
Norfolk

Dec: 31st, 1925.

Dear Sandra

I send you my
best thanks for your kind
letter & for all your
sympathy in the death of
my dear Mother. She
leaves a blank which
can never be filled &
the last link with my
happy childhood has
gone. But she, thank
God, is at peace & is
spared any further
worries or sufferings
& her death was a

beautiful one, she must
peacefully to sleep.
I was so pleased to
be able to send dear
Xenia that little cottage
at Fagmore, where she
lives with her grandchildren
& to help her in any
way I could.
With kind messages from
my Wife

Believe me

Your affectionate cousin

George R. S.

KING GEORGE TO GRAND DUKE ALEXANDER ON THE OCCASION OF
QUEEN ALEXANDRA'S DEATH

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car of American make along the roads which in the season of rains could not be navigated even by oxen; and on my first night under the roof of Ras Taffari, returning to my rooms after dinner, I found two highly coiffed girls, age twelve, crouching on the floor at my bedside—a most magnificent Imperial gift which I declined regretfully, pleading fatigue and the peculiarities of my narrow-minded upbringing.

6

The season of rains began and my secretary was running short of his supply of magic pills and still no one seemed to be interested as to when I intended to transmit my collection of firmans and edicts.

We dined each night with Ras Taffari but our conversation was strictly limited to European subjects. An absolute monarch, if ever there was one, he felt puzzled by the existence of Democracy and his questions disclosed a curious mixture of childishness and wisdom. He considered that no "Christian sovereign" should "permit" parliamentary elections, but at the same time his pitiless analysis of the real reasons of the World War testified to the shrewdness of his cynical mind.

"Why did you Russians make war on Germany," queried Ras Taffari, "when the real war should have been fought between Germany and England? Why did you not

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remain neutral and let your neighbors bleed each other white?"

This was unanswerable, as undiluted common sense usually is, and the more he talked about the mistakes committed by my relatives, the clearer it dawned on me that we should have put an Abyssinian at the head of our Imperial Council.

One night, feeling a bit wearied by these constant excursions into the past, I hinted to Ras Taffari that it would be advisable to switch our conversation toward the Holy Places.

He weighed this suggestion for a moment and then said: "Once upon a time there was a British General who came here to discuss a new treaty. He was a nice man and we liked him. We would have signed that treaty had he been willing to respect our habits. As it was, he attempted to make us move to the tempo of London life and this we declined to do. According to our traditions, he should have waited for at least a month before broaching the subject of his mission but he was a mere Britisher, don't you see. . . ."

Ras Taffari stroked his black beard pensively and sighed. This gesture alarmed me.

"So what happened to the General in the end?"

"It is a sad story," admitted Ras Taffari. "We had to give him a lesson in Ethiopian etiquette, so at first we said that a third cousin of mine had passed away during a

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journey and that no business could be conducted during the period of mourning. We mourned for six weeks. Then the period of Lent arrived. It took another seven weeks. The spring came in the meanwhile and the day approached when, following the ancient Ethiopian tradition, the Imperial Court and all the dignitaries of the country are supposed to take a strong dose of physic. It is called 'Kassa' in our language and no audiences are being granted the week before and the two weeks following. . . ."

There was a long silence in the dining room of the Imperial Palace in Addis Ababa. I would have liked to learn the exact date of the beginning of Kassa but the horrible example of the British General made me keep my curiosity in check.

And so another month passed. Our host was becoming interested in the Fascist régime in Italy and it seemed that from there we would finally be allowed to cross the Mediterranean to Palestine.

One morning—it was, to be exact, our one hundred and twenty-fifth morning in Ethiopia—we received a visit from the venerable Prime Minister. His eyes shone brightly and his grossly involved French phrasing disclosed the depth of his excitement. For the first time in the history of the descendants of the Queen of Sheba an Abyssinian Empress was willing to partake of food in the presence of foreigners: Zaudita-the-Divine, the daughter of the greatest Ethiopian Emperor Menelik II and the aunt of

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our dear friend Ras Taffari, was inviting me to be the guest of honor at a State Dinner to be given the following night. No human words could have fitted this occasion, so I bowed in silence. When the gift of speech returned to the Prime Minister he remarked that now was as good a time as any to transmit to his master my collection of firmans, a most sensible motion which was seconded a bit too enthusiastically by my deathly-pale secretary.

"Careful, careful," I said to him in Russian while keeping a mask of complete imperturbability. "The day of Kassa might be coming much sooner than we expect."

The next twenty-four hours were spent in studying the rules of etiquette. No precedents being available, it was left to a specially appointed committee of four Ministers of the Crown to decide as to how a foreigner should behave when seated on the right hand of an Abyssinian Empress. The four wise men, frightened by the immensity of their task, made an appeal to my experience. Would I consent to be the Master of Ceremonies and the guest of honor at the same time? I said I would and decided to treat Zaudita-the-Divine the way I would treat a child taken to its first dinner in a public restaurant. This scored an instantaneous hit, both with Zaudita and with the trembling members of the Court.

I began by complimenting my hostess on the arrangement of diamonds in her crown. She felt highly pleased and wondered whether I was satisfied with Ethiopian cooking.

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"I suppose," she said modestly, "you must be tired of eating chicken twice a day, but the season of rains makes it impossible to procure a fresh supply of provisions from Djibouti." I answered that I liked chicken if for no other reason than that I could not afford it any too often in Paris. She dropped her fork and looked totally bewildered. The idea of the Great White Czar's brother-in-law not being able to afford the price of a roasting chicken was thoroughly incomprehensible to Zaudita. The Prime Minister volunteered an explanation, the nature of which remained unknown to me: speaking in the presence of his Empress he had to cover his face with a handkerchief in order not to "pollute" her with his "unclean breath."

The dinner over, I was invited to inspect the trained wild animals of Her Imperial Majesty and we mixed for a while with a score of lions, tigers and panthers walking at large in a spacious hall. My secretary tried to escape this additional sign of Monarchial Hospitality but was told by Zaudita that a man of his wide knowledge of the world would miss a great deal by not seeing the results of the training methods practised in Abyssinia. I could see his lips move in fervent prayer and when I asked him to pat the head of a particularly beautiful panther he turned livid and swallowed a couple of pills.

The following morning I transmitted my celebrated file of documents to my friend Ras Taffari. The entire ceremony lasted less than five minutes although it took me

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one hundred and twenty-seven days to arrive to it. My task was accomplished and it remained for the League of Nations to do the rest. When last heard from, in the summer of 1932, its "sub-commission on mandates" was still promising a "prompt and equitable" decision.

"How about staying another month in Addis Ababa?" asked Ras Taffari. "My aunt was charmed with your conversation and she would love to see some more of you."

I reciprocated the friendly feelings of the Empress but it appeared that an affair of utmost importance was demanding my immediate return to Europe. . . . So we shook hands and promised to see each other very soon. Ras Taffari said he expected me to come back next year and to remain in Addis Ababa for a much longer period of time. He liked to hear my stories of the reign of my relatives because they helped him to decide what he should not do.

Once more I listened to the familiar tunes of the old Russian Military March, realizing that perhaps for the last time in my life I was being treated with honors reserved for an Imperial person. It takes a little over six weeks of travel by boat, train and oxen to discover a people who still respect the past.

CHAPTER NINE

THE BUBBLES OF THE EARTH

I

It was in the early part of 1926, shortly after my return from Abyssinia to Paris, that I first met Alfred Lowenstein, the financier.

My telephone rang and a deep resonant voice said:

"I am speaking on behalf of Mr. Alfred Lowenstein."

"Yes," I returned, and the voice added:

"Mr. Alfred Lowenstein of Brussels."

"Yes," I repeated and immediately thought of the gold-and-platinum automobile, the size of a trolley car, which I had often seen parked in front of the Ritz, with its two equally glittering chauffeurs always eager to explain to the passers-by that this monstrosity belonged to Mr. Lowenstein of Paris.

"My patron [the French for employer] would like to see you on a matter of great importance and utmost urgency," explained the representative of the man whose fabulous wealth, according to European gossip, favorably compared with that of King Midas or John D. Rockefeller Jr.

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I felt flattered though somewhat surprised. It was nice of Mr. Lowenstein to wish to see me and I did not doubt that the subjects occupying his mind must perforce be "great" and "utmost" in their ponderousness—but what on earth could I do for the Napoleon of European after-war promoters?

"Just a moment." I covered the receiver with my hand and turned toward my secretary. "What do you make of it?"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Not a thing. I do happen to know though that his house in Brussels is built of black marble and that he claims to have cornered the artificial silk industry of the world."

"So what? Do you suppose he now wants my advice as to the best way to lose both his house and the control of his industry?"

"One never knows."

My secretary was obviously wasting his brilliance; a man of his helpfulness should have been drafted by the Council of the League of Nations. I removed my protecting hand from the receiver and agreed to meet Mr. Lowenstein, which seemed to please his representative considerably.

"Thanks a lot," he said. "My patron will be certain to appreciate your courtesy. I shall have our car waiting at your address tomorrow at two P.M. sharp."

"Don't do that!" I exclaimed spontaneously, shudder-

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ing at the thought of riding through the streets of Paris in Mr. Lowenstein's platinum-hooded monster. "I'd much rather come by myself."

"But it is nearly twelve miles from Paris to Le Bourget."

"Why Le Bourget? Do you mean, the airdrome of Le Bourget."

"Exactly. That's where one of Mr. Lowenstein's airplanes will be waiting for you."

"Are you joking? Or is your patron in the habit of holding his conferences at a certain altitude?"

"Not quite; but don't you see, he shan't know till tomorrow whether he will receive you in his house in Brussels or in his villa in Biarritz. In either case our pilots will see to it that you have a nice and comfortable voyage."

He added something pertaining to the type of motors "exclusively" employed by Mr. Lowenstein's air fleet and hung up while I was still searching for adequate words to express my amazement.

I swore. Both he and his master must have borrowed their conference manner from the heroes of the Hollywood films. The only logical thing for me to do was to ignore the entire occurrence and not to answer my doorbell the next afternoon. But fate willed otherwise. It so happened that wherever I went that day I always collided with Mr. Lowenstein's name. It glared at me from the headlines of the papers which described his "noble deed" of granting a hundred-million-franc loan to the Govern-

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ment of Belgium, and the mammoth posters pasted on the walls along the Grands Boulevards were expressing hope that this "glorious example" would inspire the patriotic zeal of the French financiers. My curiosity aroused, I decided to call on an old friend of mine, a famous Parisian banker, and ask him what he knew of that remarkable man of Brussels. He laughed a laugh of animosity mixed with envy.

"So," he said, "even you are becoming excited about Mr. Kannitverstan."

"What did you call him?"

"Oh, it is just a pen-name we have given him in this bank. Do you remember that venerable story about a foreigner who came to Amsterdam?"

"I don't think I do. What happened to him?"

"Just this: each time he asked the natives who was the owner of this or that particular building or factory he invariably received the selfsame reply, 'Kan nit verstan,' meaning in the vernacular, 'I do not understand you.' Well, it seems that at the end of his first week in Holland, our foreigner sighed and exclaimed wistfully, 'That man Kannitverstan must be stupendously rich to possess all that valuable property. . . .'"

"In other words," I said, noticing the bitterness with which my friend had told his little story, "you are inclined to question Mr. Lowenstein's achievements. What is it, professional jealousy or first-hand information?"

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"Neither," he answered gruffly. "Fancy my questioning the reputation of a fellow of whom no one had ever heard up to the moment of the Armistice but who now is able to dictate his terms to the Governments of powerful countries. . . . After all, I am merely a banker, not a miracle worker. It took my ancestors two hundred years to build this bank, and the worst of it is that I and mine will be left holding the bag when the last is heard of Alfred Lowenstein. I fear it will be our task to pay for the havoc wrought by all those super-geniuses!"

"So you would not advise me to meet him, would you?"

"By all means! And do it in a hurry too because it looks to me as though the golden age of the jazz financing is drawing to an end. Read your Shakespeare:

'The earth hath bubbles, as the water has
And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?'

"You must be doing a great deal of reading," I said tentatively.

"That's the best I can do these days," he replied sardonically. "We moth-eaten, old-fashioned fellows dare not compete with Kreugers and Lowensteins. We crawl—they fly!"

"That's it," I admitted. "He insists I go to him by air . . ."

"Why not?" grumbled my friend. "God knows, he deals in it in sufficiently large amounts."

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The pilots—three of them—met me at the entrance gates of Le Bourget. It appeared that Mr. Lowenstein wanted me to choose between a Handley-Page, a Fokker, a Voisin, a . . .

"Now, wait, wait," I interrupted, my eyes still hurting from looking at too much gold and platinum inside the monster-car. "Don't you think it is for you men to decide as to which one of your airplanes is in better shape?"

They looked pained, almost indignant.

"What we meant," said a tall dictatorial Englishman, "is that in case you have some writing or dictation to do en route, you would be more comfortable in the Fokker as it contains a fully equipped office. On the other hand, if you are interested to view the panorama, you should take the two-seater Voisin."

The choice between dictation and panorama settled in favor of the latter, I inquired whether I would be permitted to learn as to where we were going.

"Is it Brussels or Biarritz?"

"I have sealed orders," explained the Englishman. "The pilot in charge will open them at the altitude of two thousand feet, as usual."

"As usual? Is the war still going on?"

No, he knew all about the war having been won some

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eight years ago but Mr. Lowenstein was reluctant to have the movements of his guests watched by the reporters.

"A chap cannot be any too careful when working for a man of Mr. Lowenstein's importance," concluded the Englishman.

I sighed. I was beginning to hate the sound of that word "importance."

We took off in an atmosphere charged with secrecy and much whispering between the employees of Le Bourget. The pilot-in-charge asked me whether I had ever flown before and I understood that my identity remained undisclosed to him and his comrades. When the altitude of two thousand feet was reached by us, he tore open a large sealed envelope and passed to me a thick sheet of watermarked paper. It read "Biarritz" and was signed with just one letter "L." I felt relieved: the pleasure of spending a few hours in Biarritz was well worth going through this ludicrous comedy.

I expected that we would land at Bayonne, it being the only town possessing an airdrome in the extreme southwest of France, but I underestimated Mr. Lowenstein's vast possibilities. Having flown some three hundred fifty miles, we came down on a spacious landing directly adjoining what Mr. Lowenstein called his "little week-end place" but what looked to me like the largest country house this side of Suez.

Another voyage, this time through an enfilade of glitter-

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ing rooms and past monumental butlers, and I was ushered into the presence of Alfred Lowenstein. He stood behind a surprisingly small desk in his study, an unprepossessing man in his middle forties, dressed in heavy English tweeds and conveying an impression of extreme nervousness and restlessness. I noticed how his face twitched when he made an attempt at a welcoming smile, and this did not seem to fit into my preconceived picture of a boisterous newly-rich. Nothing in his appearance suggested that subconscious arrogance of huge wealth which is so peculiar to both Wall Street operators and European war-profiteers. He could easily have passed for a small German merchant on a holiday but his French sounded unmistakably Belgian. It was the French of a man who had begun to pay attention to grammar rather late in life.

"Hate to cause you all this trouble," he said rapidly, swallowing most of the words and leaving the endings of his phrases to my imagination, "but you see . . . It's like this . . . The day before yesterday . . . Or was it last week? No, it was the day before yesterday, I heard wonderful things about you, marvelous things. Do you know who is your greatest friend? Who loves you? Who would like to help you?"

No, I did not know anyone of that description. I wish I did.

He laughed and waved his hands.

"Don't blame you . . . Not for a second. . . . Bitter

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bread of exile . . . Memories of the past. . . . Most damnable situation of all . . . But take the advice of a man who knows—courage! Not everything is lost yet. . . . I say, courage! Before you leave this house, you will become a new man. . . . Will never need anything again as long as you live . . . Isn't it peculiar that we two should meet like this?"

It was peculiar but I still waited to hear the name of my mysterious faithful friend.

"Ah!" His face twitched again, imitating a smile. "I really shouldn't disclose his name but I will . . . I MUST because we two are going to do great things together. Your friend who talked to me about you is none other than His Majesty——"

And he mentioned the name of an European sovereign well remembered for his heroic conduct during the war. He lied, of course, because there was no reason why the person in question should have talked about me with anyone, least of all with Alfred Lowenstein.

"It was awfully sweet of His Majesty to give me such a splendid record," I said meekly. "I shall write him a letter and thank him for it."

He frowned.

"I wouldn't do it if I were you. Ours was a secret, strictly secret conference. His Majesty asked me to help his Minister of Finance and I naturally volunteered to put my entire fortune at his disposal, every franc of it. Money

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doesn't interest me any more. I've lots of it, barrels of it, tons of it. If I lived to be a thousand I wouldn't be able to spend even a fraction of my fortune. I am not like those silly Americans who die at their desks counting their dollars. The Americans!" He sneered and snapped his fingers. "I showed them how to make money, didn't I? I showed them who is the real master of the rayon and the copper industries, didn't I?"

I nodded. I had to because he was waiting for it. For all I knew he might have shown the Americans all that and more.

"But that's all in the past," continued my eloquent host. "Now that I am what I am, I have three ambitions to achieve. First of all, I decided to win the Epsom Derby, not later than in spring nineteen-thirty. I am allowing myself five years to turn this trick."

That was very prudent of Mr. Lowenstein to give himself sufficient time. I wondered, however, whether a man of even his persuasive powers could force a horse to come first to the finishing post at Epsom Downs.

"Are you thinking of buying yearlings?" I inquired, hoping he was not mistaking me for my cousin Dimitry, celebrated for his knowledge of horseflesh.

"Decidedly not," he answered with a deprecating grimace. "Where is the guarantee that my yearlings would grow up to be real champions?"

There was none, I readily agreed.



International News Photo

EMPEROR RAS TAFFARI OF ABYSSINIA, HIS WIFE AND CHILDREN

He expected his Russian "cousin" to help him regain possession of the Savior's grave



International News Photo

ALFRED LOWENSTEIN

Had three ambitions: to win the Epsom Derby, to be knighted, and to break into Society

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"No, my dear Grand Dukë," said Mr. Lowenstein, tapping me gently on the sleeve. "I shall use entirely different methods. I will simply buy each spring, for the next five years to come, all the best entries in the Epsom Derby who look like probable winners. . . . Pretty good idea, eh?"

I swallowed hard and suggested timidly that there might be some English owners who would refuse to sell their entries in the Epsom Derby.

"Know them all, including Aga Khan," said Mr. Lowenstein. "Just a question of money, nothing else. A hundred thousand pounds more or less, and you shall see me leading the Derby winner into the Royal Enclosure. Now then, to proceed with my other two ambitions, and that's where I will need your assistance."

He lowered his voice, looked me straight in the eyes and said briskly:

"I want a title and a position in International Society."

My recent experience with the Government of Ethiopia, who expected me to restore to them the Abyssinian Convent in Jerusalem, had considerably diminished my capacity for registering surprise, but I was taken aback by this new development in my career.

"A title and a position in International Society," I repeated automatically, "and that's what made you bring me to Biarritz. I thought I heard your representative mention some affair of great importance and utmost urgency."

"Nothing could be more important, and as for urgency,

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—the quicker the better! I understand that the owner of the Derby winner is usually a titled person of the highest social standing.”

“Quite so,” I confirmed, certain by then that the poor fellow had lost his mind. “But why call on me? I do not distribute titles and I have never been much of a society leader. What can I do?”

“A lot. Help me break the social barriers in Paris and in London and I myself shall take care of the rest. Here is the list of people I want to be my week-end guests. Should I succeed in getting them here, I am established with everybody and I’ll have no difficulty in getting a title from my own Government!”

I looked at the list. It read like a condensed edition of the *Almanach de Gotha*. No one lower than a Viscount was permitted to enter the ranks of Mr. Lowenstein’s prospective week-end guests.

“Very nice names,” I complimented my host.

“First class. This list has been compiled by two senior diplomats in the Foreign Office. Now then, let’s talk business.”

“Business?”

“Yes. I stand ready to pay you two thousand dollars a week for a period of five years.”

“In return for which I am expected to do what?”

He took a sheet of paper from the desk and passed it to me. Then he threw himself back in his chair and lighted

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a cigar. He looked as if he felt that his job was done and that mine was about to commence.

"What is it? An invitation?" I asked, seeing that the opening phrase requested "the pleasure of —— presence at a garden party to be given," etc.

"How do you like the signature?"

"The signature?"

I inspected it and gasped. It read: "Alfred Lowenstein, per Alexander the Grand Duke of Russia"!

"And that's all I expect of you," he said, puffing his enormous black cigar. "Just sign my invitations! Not much work, considering the salary I am willing to pay, now, is there?"

So sincere was he in his fascinating ignorance, so instructive was it to watch that recognized financial genius of Europe disclose both his contempt and his adoration for a Society founded before his days, that it would have been utterly childish on my part to create a scene or attempt to chastise him. I laughed my first good laugh since 1914 and we parted good friends. I promised to keep in touch with his progress toward the Royal Enclosure; he, on the other hand, felt convinced that I would reconsider my foolish decision not to accept his magnificent offer.

"You'll hear from me very soon," he said as we were shaking hands in front of the silver-winged Voisin. "I give you two weeks to think it over but then I'll have to take my next best bet."

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3

His "next best bet" turned out to be a young French Duke, bearer of one of the oldest names in the world and a nephew of a popular reigning King to boot. It seems that the young man's parents, enraged by his escapades, had cut down his allowance and he retaliated by accepting Mr. Lowenstein's offer.

I would never have believed such a thing could actually occur but there was an invitation to the selfsame greatly discussed week-end party in Biarritz lying on my desk and signed—"Alfred Lowenstein, per the Duke de ———." Attached to it was a short note: "I suppose you will be sorry now," wrote my magnanimous friend, "particularly if I tell you that I got this youngster for a fourth as much as I was willing to pay you."

I read and reread that fabulous invitation. It bore all the earmarks of a potential social scandal and I expected fireworks of gossip, storms of indignation and solemn protests from the young Duke's irate relatives and friends. I waited in vain. Had a similar event taken place before 1914, Mr. Lowenstein's exalted hireling would have been blackboarded by every club throughout Europe, but now people just shrugged their shoulders and said: "What would you? It is better to be a freak's social secretary than not to have any money at all. With our poor franc having

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lost nine-tenths of its former value, the young boy is to be complimented on his business acumen. After all, he will merely be collecting from Lowenstein what Lowenstein took away from the rest of us." That was all. No one cared to conjecture what Aristocracy might do next should the perfidious franc take another tumble.

I did not attend the famous week-end party but almost every one of my friends did. The advance guard of the First Crusade could not have boasted of finer names. The list of the titled men and women who answered the call issued by the young Duke may have been mistaken for a roster of the descendants of the First Crusaders gathered in convention at a villa in Biarritz.

This exceedingly "broad-minded" attitude of Society, explainable as it was in that summer of financial panic in France, was to receive an additional impetus a few weeks later, when it became known that Ivar Kreuger had extended a substantial loan to the Government of Poincaré. He was the only capitalist in Europe who continued to believe in the stability of France! The vernacular papers experienced a considerable difficulty in spelling the name of their country's benefactor but otherwise it was considered quite proper and just that a Swedish manufacturer of matches should save the Republic of France.

When reading the news of Kreuger's promotion to Grand Officer of the Legion of Honor I wondered a bit as to how the triumph of his bitter Scandinavian rival

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would affect my ambitious friend of Brussels. So great was the difference in the make-up of these two men that at the time it was impossible to detect the striking similarity of their methods. Thinking of them from a distance, I realize that the polished Viking and the uncouth Belgian belonged to the selfsame breed that had engendered Hugo Stinnes in Germany, Clarence Hatry in England and a dozen or so of the geniuses of stock syncopation in Wall Street. Born on the day of the Armistice, they passed away together with the 1920's. None of them survived the Jazz Era, and even if a matter of eight long years does separate the collapse of the Empire of Stinnes from the suicide of Kreuger, this fact should merely be credited either to the intelligence of the Germans or debited to the stupidity of the American investors. With Stinnes, Kreuger and Lowenstein resting in their graves and with Hatry serving his twenty-year sentence in jail, no one is left in Europe today to keep up the rhythm of the 1920's. The bubbles of the earth have vanished.

4

All this appears clear and simple now: nothing is insoluble for our hindsight. But in the summer of 1926, when I first met Alfred Lowenstein and renewed my former acquaintance with Kreuger; it would have taken a much better analyst than myself to predict the ultimate end of

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the two conquerors. I always had a great liking for Kreuger. He talked well, he behaved like a real gentleman and possessed that very rare talent of entering into the interests and adopting the terminology of whomever he happened to be dealing with at the moment. He was introduced to me shortly before the war during my summer stay in London. In the following years I heard nothing of him, except what I read in the papers about his gigantic business enterprises. It was with considerable surprise and no small pleasure that I discovered when going through my mail one morning a letter bearing his signature. He said he had just finished reading the French edition of my book *Spiritual Education* and would like to have a talk with me. It happened during the same week when he granted a loan to the French Government and I was doubly pleased to think that a man as busy as Kreuger should find sufficient time to bother with something so far removed from money matters. I invited him to have dinner in a quiet restaurant in the older part of Paris where I knew we would not be disturbed by too many idle gossipers. When riding in his car I frankly told him that I could scarcely believe that he was really interested in spiritualism. He smiled and said that his success on this planet did not prevent him from being curious about the hereafter. He wondered whether my theories of the communion with spirits were based on actual experience or whether I might have been misled by an unscrupulous medium. I explained to him both the

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technique and the results of my own experiments and then he suddenly said:

"If you are not engaged tomorrow night, would it be too much to ask you to show me how it is done?"

I said "yes" though I felt embarrassed, knowing how utterly useless it is to conduct a spiritualistic séance in the presence of skeptics and unbelievers. It was agreed that he would come to my apartment the next night right after dinner.

As we were getting out of his car in front of the restaurant, I noticed a huge object glittering in the darkness. Our chauffeur put his lights on and I recognized the famous vehicle of Alfred Lowenstein. It struck me as strange. It did not seem to be a proper eating place for a man who had decided to win the Epsom Derby. Possibly, I thought, it might be his secretary or chauffeur. We went in, and there, at a small table adjoining the entrance, seated in solitude in front of a cocktail, I saw the Great Man from Brussels. This was too remarkable to be just a plain coincidence and I looked at Kreuger questioningly. He met my glance unperturbed, in a thoroughly innocent manner.

"Something wrong?" he asked.

"Nothing, except that Alfred Lowenstein appears to be likewise a lover of out-of-the-way restaurants."

Kreuger looked all over the room and only then turned toward the table which was directly facing us.

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"To be certain," he said casually, "that man does look like Lowenstein, at least like his pictures."

"Have you never met him?"

"No," he answered with a half-smile, "although I dare say he knows all about me."

During this time Lowenstein was concentrating on the contents of his cocktail. He was possibly trying to solve the problem as to why the maraschino cherry floats on the surface instead of sinking to the bottom. Not until we were seated at the table opposite did he raise his shifty eyes. Then he registered a colossal surprise. He waved his hands, shouted "hello," twitched his face in a near-smile, and finally jumped up and made for our table.

"Well," I said, "after all these years you are going to shake hands with your rival."

"I don't mind," said Kreuger. "I really have nothing against him. Why don't you invite him to join us?"

A malicious thought crossed my mind. It would have been a fine joke on both great schemers just to shake hands with Lowenstein and send him back to his table. . . . Alas! I was never granted that opportunity.

"Trust a Russian to arrange a meeting between a Swede and a Belgian," exclaimed Lowenstein, coming to us with extended arms.

"What that Russian should really have done," I said, "was to give sealed orders to Mr. Kreuger's chauffeur with instructions not to open them until under way."

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This was another joke wasted by me that evening. So eager were the two men to be friendly and so difficult must it have been for them to decide who should make the first step, that not until the liqueurs had been served did they stop the exchange of compliments. Then Kreuger said:

"Why not invite Lowenstein to our séance tomorrow night?"

This was too much for me to swallow. I protested vehemently and minced no words in suggesting that they should meet again elsewhere. We fought till midnight. Naturally I lost.

"Only remember," I warned Lowenstein, "the spirits are not interested in the rayon industry."

"Don't I know it?" he said. "They spend their entire time counting Kreuger's matches."

5

Looking back on that hot and stuffy summer night of 1926, I have no undue illusions about the motives which had brought Kreuger and Lowenstein to my modest apartment in Paris. I recognize that, feeling grateful to me for having acted as their unconscious intermediary, they wanted to be polite and keep up the bluff. And yet, as I remember the clear eyes and fine face of Kreuger, I do think that he at least was not entirely faking interest. There is a great deal in the Scandinavian character which

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resembles the Russian; both are hiding a genuine spiritual zeal under a mask of cynicism and their reluctance to accept facts not proven by science only testifies to their deep-rooted thirst for real knowledge.

Had it not been for the presence of Lowenstein, we would possibly have succeeded in getting "results," but he came to have a laugh and he was asking incessantly whether the "spirit of the late Carnegie" would consent to advise him on the future of the steel industry. Finally I gave up in disgust and we spent the balance of the evening discussing the political situation in Europe. As I recall it, both my guests were of the opinion that the key to the stability of the world lay in a Franco-German alliance. Neither of them predicted the possibility of a crisis in America, then still three years away. A stranger listening to the conversation of Kreuger and Lowenstein would have been somewhat disappointed in his expectations. They talked in a vein typical of the 1920's and saw no shadows on the horizon.

When I met Kreuger last, in the spring of 1930 in New York, I recalled to him his optimistic speeches and asked how a man of his tremendous experience could have been so blissfully unaware of the approaching débâcle. "I still am optimistic," he said with conviction. "We are going through a crisis but we shall live to see a still greater prosperity. I have never been a stock exchange manipulator as our friend Lowenstein was and that is why I refuse to

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bow to this hysterical Market. Lowenstein perished just because he attempted to substitute the cunning of a gambler for the grit of a builder. He could have lasted a year or so more, but in the end it would have been the same—a jump from an airplane or a bullet in the brain. . . . He and his like never win.”

I never saw Kreuger again. I confess willingly and frankly that up to that March Saturday of last spring in Paris when the afternoon papers published extras announcing his suicide I continued to think that it was quite a lucky thing for this topsy-turvy world of ours that a man of Ivar Kreuger's caliber was still among the living. For that matter, even today, in the face of all sensational revelations and bewildering discoveries, I refuse to believe that he was just a crook. A victim, possibly. A scapegoat, probably. But not a crook.

He outlived Lowenstein by three years and eight months and what he saw during that time must have made him regret that he had waited so long. His Belgian rival had at least one consolation: whether he jumped from that airplane in July, 1928, or whether his dead body was thrown into the Channel by his assassins—the Scotland Yard investigation revealed that it would take three giants to open the door of Lowenstein's Fokker in flight—he very nearly achieved his ambition No. 1! True enough, it was the Grand Steeplechase of Paris instead of the Epsom Derby, but he did hear his glittering gold colors cheered by the

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crowds, even if he had to buy the winning horse from its former owner the day before the race at a fantastic price and even if he had to be satisfied with receiving the accolade from a mere President of a Republic instead of a King. "Magellan" was the name of the horse and the race was run at Auteuil, on June 15, 1928. Calvin Coolidge was President of the United States and General Motors had just struck a "new high for all times."

CHAPTER TEN

THE TALE OF TWO SISTERS

I

THEY both lived to be eighty.

When the elder of the two died, they buried Old England. When the younger followed three years later, the last of Imperial Russia became extinct.

Both were Danish, by birth and character. Had anyone called them Danish to their faces, both would have been mortally offended. Alexandra was British, more British than the Union Jack. Marie was Russian, more Russian than the bells of Moscow. There is no end to the adaptability of a Danish Princess.

I could never think of them separately. Whenever people asked, "How is your mother-in-law?" I answered almost automatically, "She is fine, she has just received a lovely letter from her sister."

Not before the very end, not until the day when in the Cathedral of Copenhagen I saw her lying in her coffin, did it dawn on me that my poor mother-in-law had never been "fine" and that the three thousand-odd letters received by her from her English sister—one each week, for

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a period of over sixty years—had made her realize on three thousand-odd occasions the appalling difference between the two Empires.

Back in the 1860's the choice between the Prince of Wales and the Cesarevich was a toss-up. Both matches were highly desirable from the point of view of the Crown of Denmark. Both Princesses were sweet and attractive. A last-minute change in the plans of the respective Chancelleries could easily have sent Alexandra to St. Petersburg and chaos, and brought Marie to London and harmony. When they parted at the station in Copenhagen, Alexandra envied Marie: the Romanoffs were fantastically rich and there was no Queen Victoria in Russia.

The gods were not to blame: they went out of their way to warn Marie. Her fiancé, Cesarevich Nicholas Alexandrovich, died shortly after her arrival in St. Petersburg. A superstitious person would have rushed back home and tried to marry one of the fifty available heel-clicking German reigning Princes. But there was her father, the King of Denmark, who expected his daughters to procure for his country what it had always lacked: a friendly Fleet and a friendly Army. The Danish Minister in St. Petersburg thought that not all was lost as yet. He rather fancied the new Cesarevich Alexander Alexandrovich. True enough, the disappointed Princess hardly reached the elbow of her would-be bridegroom but that was completely in accordance with the best traditions of the postcard eugen-

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ics; towering men and petite women. The reason for Russia's determination to have a Danish Princess on the throne of the Romanoffs remained unknown. Possibly our Minister of Foreign Affairs was anxious to insult the King of Prussia. As matchmakers, Russian diplomats had always been brave warriors.

And so the marriage took place and my future mother-in-law missed her chance of escape. "It was written in the Books," she said, but then she never complained. When I once suggested, at a time when our funds were scarce and prospects particularly gloomy, that fate had dealt unkindly with her, she thought I was crazy. She would not have swapped lives with her sister Alexandra for all the Rajahs of India and all the diamonds of South Africa.

She felt it was "foreordained" that they should live separated by a dynamite-charged continent for fifty-four years and by the scruples of Democracy for the remaining eight. From 1863 to 1917 it was the sad duty of Marie to remember that not much love existed between the Bear and the Lion, not even in the hysterical three years of their war alliance. From 1917 to 1925 it had been constantly brought to the attention of Her Britannic Majesty that England had nothing to gain by extending too lavish a hospitality to an elderly "ci-devant" who used to be the Empress of Russia. What Heine said of another race can be applied to the British: "Für das Gewesene gibt er nichts."

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It was fortunate for Alexandra that the opinions of Downing Street counting for naught in the Great Beyond she could afford the luxury of a posthumous gesture: when her will was opened and read, it was discovered that she had left most of her jewelry and a bit of money to her seventy-seven-year-old sister. She thought that her beloved son George, and daughter-in-law Mary, well provided for and living in surroundings of reasonable comfort, would understand her anxiety to help a despondent exile. They did.

On Christmas Eve of 1925 there sat a tiny, prim lady in the writing room of a big house in Hvidovre in Denmark. She held in her hands the list of people to whom she used to send a Christmas telegram and she could not get it into her head that she must scratch out the name that headed the list.

"Even in nineteen-seventeen," she said, "when we were imprisoned by the Bolsheviki, I managed to send my telegram to England. I never failed to do it for sixty-two years."

2

The art of white lies may attract ambitious amateurs—witness the pathetic efforts of America's Chief Executives—but it takes a craftsman to master its intricacies. Even in the ever-smiling official Europe of yesterday the two royal sisters of Denmark remained unsurpassed. When they

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went for their morning drive, Alexandra in Hyde Park, Marie along the Nevsky—it seemed that Marx had never written *Capital* and that the world still consisted entirely of 'Their Majesties' adoring subjects. Solemnity came to them by inheritance, but radiance through their own tireless efforts. Infinitely patient, they charmed when they wanted to rant, and the age-old system of spreading good cheer achieved the grandeur of a Brahman cult in their case.

"Splendid" and "fine" as used by them in their correspondence were code-words denoting a proud refusal to confess even to one's own sister that things were going from bad to worse.

"The morale of the Russian nation is splendid," wrote Marie in the tragic days of the Russo-Japanese War.

"Everything is fine," wrote Alexandra when the protracted visits of King Edward in the South of France became known in St. Petersburg.

They met each spring in Copenhagen. Their reunion would last three weeks. They would embrace, talk of pleasant nothings, sigh over the passing of time, and then they would embrace again and say: "Until next spring."

Never a word about the growing unrest in Russia, never an inkling of the family complications in Buckingham Palace.

"How is everything in Russia?"

"Oh, splendid."

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"And Nicky? I hear that his popularity is increasing every day."

"It is, indeed. And how is Bertie?"

"Fine. I am supremely happy."

"I am so glad. And the children?"

"Well, you know, George is to be married soon."

"Dear boy. I still think of him as a baby."

And so on *ad infinitum*.

Both realized, of course, that Nicky would never make a good Emperor and that the title of "ideal husband" could not be bestowed upon Bertie even by the Court Sycophants, but it was silently agreed between the two sisters that they should cherish each other's illusions. Contentment, as they understood it, consisted of illusions, while illusions depended on white lies.

Living aboard their yachts stationed in the waters of neutral Denmark, sufficiently far from the cockpit of European strife, they would spend their happy three weeks in an atmosphere of mutual adoration and mutual encouragement. King Edward himself bowed to the rule that no "politics," nothing pertaining to the Russo-British differences and liable to upset the relations between the two radiant ladies, be mentioned for three weeks. It must have pained him to sit for hours at the dinner table and not conduct an impromptu international conference but one does not discuss Secret Treaties at a children's party, least of all in the presence of gray-haired children.

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All kinds of children as well as all ages were represented at those luncheons and dinners. Nothing short of death could keep their participants from attending the spring reunion in Copenhagen. Even from this distance I can see the following faces: the Prince and the Princess of Wales (later King Edward and Queen Alexandra). Emperor Alexander III and Empress Marie, Cesarevich Nicholas Alexandrovich (later Czar Nicholas II), Empress Alexandra Feodorovna, Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, George, Duke of York (now King George V), Louise the Princess Royal (later the Duchess of Fife), Victoria the Princess Royal, Maud the Princess Royal (later Queen Maud of Norway), Grand Duke George, Grand Duke Michael, Grand Duchess Xenia (later my wife), Grand Duchess Olga, the very youthful Prince "David" (the present Prince of Wales) and his sister Mary (the present Princess Royal) and his brother George (the present Duke of York), myself and my brothers, my sister the Grand Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin and her two daughters (the present Queen Alexandrine of Denmark and the present Crown Princess of Germany), Prince Christian and Prince Charles of Denmark (the present Kings of Denmark and Norway), etc., etc.

We all came to worship at the shrine of the two royal matriarchs who sat at opposite ends of a long table, highly-coiffed, erect, solemn, supervising the distribution of "surprises" among the children and smiling at the grown-ups

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with a benevolent air which always said: "You see how easy it is to forget the existence of diplomatic chancelleries when you deal with your kin. Blood is thicker than Secret Treaties." Whatever they uttered, in so many words or with smiles, never sounded platitudinous. Both possessed that rare sincerity of purpose which enabled them to quote hackneyed proverbs in a way thoroughly unoffensive even to a cynical pair of ears. When, putting her hand on the sleeve of her massive brother-in-law Emperor Alexander III, Alexandra would suggest that unselfishness should govern the relations between the Great Powers, he nodded and said, "You are right" almost enthusiastically. He would have knocked down anyone else for a piece of similar advice.

It took the World War to scratch the spring reunion in Copenhagen off the calendar of European royalty. When I boarded the yacht of Queen Alexandra for the last time in my life, in the spring of 1924, after ten years of absence, I wished I had not come. It was one thing to know that the majority of those who had sat at the long table were dead; it was another thing to see the emptiness of the dining room and listen to the stillness of the yacht.

"Just like old times," said my mother-in-law and smiled heroically. Nothing but the presence of the two radiant ladies suggested the old days. King George, Queen Mary and their children were detained in London. The Crown Princess of Germany was still considered our "enemy" and

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naturally could not attend. The children of my sister-in-law Grand Duchess Olga sat in the places formerly occupied by their late cousins, daughters of their late uncle Nicky. "Let's go and play deck-tennis," I said to them and rushed out. They followed me, interested but somewhat skeptical.

"Can you play tennis, Uncle Sandro?"

"Oh, yes," I said, "we always played tennis, right here on this very deck."

"Did the Czar like to play it too?"

"Very much so. He and your late British uncle, the Duke of Clarence, were our champions."

"Can you swim?"

"Rather. You see that British destroyer?" I pointed toward the spot, about half a mile away, formerly reserved for the Russian Imperial Yacht. "We used to swim from here to there, drink a glass of milk and then swim back."

"Do they sell milk on the destroyer?"

"No," I said, "it was another boat there. A Russian boat."

The children whispered among themselves and looked at me questioningly.

"What is it?" I asked.

"We were wondering, Uncle Sandro," said the elder boy, "whether it was difficult for you and Uncle Nicky to receive permission to come here."

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"Permission? What do you mean?"

"Didn't you tell mother yesterday that you spent several days in the Danish Consulate in Paris trying to get a visa?"

"That's true," I admitted. "But, you see, the Danish consul in St. Petersburg knew us quite well."

It would have taken me too long a time to explain to my youthful nephews that the Russian Czar and his relatives were not in the habit of traveling armed with passports. Born after the revolution in Copenhagen, where their mother lived in surroundings of utmost modesty, they were convinced that each and every Russian was always a *persona non grata* in Denmark.

3

It is difficult to realize that both sisters were only eighty when they died. They outlived so many epochs, empires and policies that it seems they must have been well over two hundred.

When they first left their native Denmark, Disraeli was a struggling upstart and the best European strategists were predicting the victory of General Robert E. Lee.

On the day of Marie's death Winston Churchill was publishing the fourth volume of his memoirs and the American bankers were struggling with the problem of European reparations.

Until the very end they talked of King George as if he

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were still a boy ("Always forgets to put on his warm overcoat") and the mention of Bismarck's name invariably brought a frown to their beautiful faces ("You know those Prussian Junkers, always bluffing"). Not that they had to be reminded of the pivotal events of European history and of the exact age of their children and contemporaries, but having spent their lives in the midst of an endless pageant they considered it superfluous to distinguish between yesterday and tomorrow. Alexandra's elder son, the Duke of Clarence, died in 1892. Marie's second son, Grand Duke George Alexandrovich, succumbed to tuberculosis in 1899. King Edward passed away in 1909. The Czar and his family were assassinated in 1918. The dates were different but dates never mattered, only the fact of the four tragedies, only the realization of their loss.

"It is extremely fortunate," said Alexandra, "that my sister refuses to believe that Nicky is dead."

What she really meant was that she wished she could doubt the death of her husband and her favorite son.

"How harmonious and beautiful was your life," I said to her once. "You were given the satisfaction of seeing Great Britain become the most powerful nation in the world. You witnessed the supreme triumphs of your husband and your second son. You are the most beloved woman in the whole of the British Empire and your grandson is the idol of the entire world."

"But I likewise buried the two human beings I loved

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best," she answered quietly, "and I was unfortunate enough to live to see the destruction of all that my sister cherished."

We were right, both of us. Evidently someone else was wrong. The last eight years of Alexandra and eleven years of Marie were dedicated to the ungrateful task of discovering the identity of that someone else. Confirmed Christians, they never doubted the ultimate wisdom of their Maker's acts, and their willingness to blame themselves and their shortcomings for the great tragedies of their lives had prevented them from compromising with their consciences. "Humans are punished for their own sins." That was simple enough. The difficulty began when they tried to determine whether or not the upright A must suffer because a punishment has to be meted out to the sinful B. This sounds frightfully Russian but then the Russian attitude toward the Almighty is characteristic of practically all elderly people, be they imperturbable Danes or skeptical French.

Did it increase the happiness of the world to have the Russian Empire destroyed? Did it redeem a single soul that she who had been Princess Dagmar of peaceful Denmark of sixty years ago was brought to Russia and forced to live through the assassination of her father-in-law, her two sons and her five grandchildren?

"God giveth and God taketh away"—both sisters liked to believe that this formula provided an answer to every

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one of their doubts. Alexandra said it often. And so did Marie. They always did their thinking in chorus, even when one would be in London, in the cold luxury of Marlborough House, while the other would grieve in the solitude of her Danish retirement.

"You should have stayed in England," I said to my mother-in-law shortly after she moved to Denmark in 1924. "This separation from your sister is bad for you. It makes you gloomy."

She shook her head.

"You don't understand, Sandro. I am much closer to my sister when there is a distance between us. When I lived in London, I felt estranged from her."

Shyness and pride kept her from admitting that she refused to share her sister with the latter's family and England. Here in Hvidore, with a sea between them, she possessed the whole of Alexandra's image. There in London, in Marlborough House, she had to spend many an evening alone in her apartment while Alexandra was attending a State dinner or a reception in the palace. Here nothing had changed: she was still treated as Empress by the members of her household. There she had to bear in mind that from the point of view of Downing Street she was only a poor relation and a compromising guest.

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4

Queen Alexandra died on November 20, 1925. In answer to my letter of condolence King George wrote:

Dear Sandro,

I send you my best thanks for your kind letter and for all your sympathy in the death of my poor mother. She leaves a blank which can never be filled and the last link with my happy childhood has gone. But she, thank God, is at peace and is spared any further worries or sufferings and her death was a beautiful one, she went peacefully to sleep. I was so pleased to be able to lend dear Xenia that little cottage at Frangmare where she lives with her grandchildren and to help her in any way I could.

With kind messages from my Wife

Believe me

Your affectionate cousin

GEORGE R.I.

Sympathetic as I was with King George, I was naturally more concerned about my mother-in-law. I knew it was her turn now and that nothing her daughters or I could do would make up for the absence of her sister. To King George his mother symbolized "the last link" with his happy childhood. For my mother-in-law her sister was the one and only link with life. She loved her daughters and she was extremely fond of her grandchildren but she always said they could do without her. Since 1918 her world

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consisted of Alexandra. It was empty and deserted now. She was impatient to go.

She lived for three years more but aside from following her usual routine she evidenced no interest in what was happening around her. She never acknowledged letters coming from Paris and telling her of the clash between the supporters of Cyril and the champions of the old Grand Duke Nicholas. There was only one Emperor of Russia so far as she was concerned—her son Nicky. She was satisfied that he was still alive. At least she said so. All the others were ridiculous or obnoxious or both. She felt it beneath her dignity to take sides, to issue manifestoes, to participate in sham battles. Only once did she register protest and then her voice broke. It happened when she learned of the claims of that strange Polish girl in New York who insisted that she was Grand Duchess Anastasia, the youngest daughter of the Czar. "What do they think?" she exclaimed. "That I would sit here in Hvidore and not rush to my granddaughter's side?" I tried to explain to her that there was no way of fighting American passion for freaks and impostors, but she was mortally offended.

In the early fall of 1928 she became ill and on October 12 of that year I received a telegram from my wife asking me to start for Denmark at once. She was dead by the time I arrived. The news of her death stirred the imagination of the Danish people and she was to be given a State

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funeral. She herself would have, no doubt, preferred to be buried next to her sister but that was impossible. Alexandra belonged to England. Marie belonged to the Empire that was no more. So she was to stay in the country of her birth, among people whom she considered strangers.

For the last time in her career and for the first time since the revolution, she was carried at the head of that pageant which follows all sovereigns so long as they retain the power to distribute decorations and grant promotions. In her death the Dowager-Empress of Russia suddenly recaptured what she had lost on the day of her son's abdication: the center of the stage. Even though her immediate relatives were penniless exiles, some two score of reigning royalty marched behind her coffin and there were enough Ambassadors and Envoys-Extraordinary jammed in the Cathedral of Copenhagen to start another World War. Most of them would have refused to visa her passport had she been alive and anxious to travel. They came because they wanted to be photographed by American camera men and because they recognized that this funeral would provide them with material for their memoirs. "She died as she lived—a Tragic Empress," said one of them, a pompous fool whom I had known for ages. Hearing his voice, the voice of an elderly eunuch, I was seized by an overpowering desire to grab a heavy chandelier and hit him on the head.

The funeral over, I spent a few hours shaking hands and

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chatting with my European reigning cousins some of whom I had not seen since 1914. It was a pity, they said, that the "inordinate pride" of the deceased kept them from coming to her aid in her last ten years. "Quite so," I agreed. It is bad form to call a King a liar at a funeral.

Back in Hvidore I found the two stalwart Cossacks. They sat on the steps of the big house, staring into space, inconsolable, haggard. What were they to do now? All their lives, both before and after the revolution, they depended on the Empress. They were the only two of her formerly large bodyguard who remained faithful to her through the miseries of 1917-1918.

"Don't worry," I said. "I know that Her Majesty made a provision for you in her will."

"It's not that," said the younger of the two, a bearded giant of six-feet-four.

"What is it then?"

"Sort of lonesome without Her Majesty," he said shyly.

5

Chatter. . . . Chatter. . . . Chatter. . . .

It was as if every one of my cousins feared lest he should be outdone in this tournament of commonplaces.

"A truly great woman."

"A wonderful mother."

"A noble heart."

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"The conscience of European royalty."

"Charm personified."

"The tragic image of a tragic era."

When they finally donned their silk hats and left, not to be seen by us again unless there was another funeral, I took my wife and my sister-in-law to the familiar room where thirty-five years before we used to play the game of "wolf" with Emperor Alexander III. We had nothing to say to each other. We all knew it was the end of the Russia we loved and that very soon it would be our turn to leave. Life was still beautiful and there was the sea just below the windows, but from now on we had to travel separately. There was no one among the living now who could say: "Do not mind Sandro, just give him time. He always comes back." With my usual selfishness I was thinking of myself and I brooded because I had lost the only woman toward whom I felt what sons are supposed to feel toward their mothers. My own died when I was twenty-five and my attachment to her had never overreached the limits of conventional devotion.

The will was read the next morning. As we all expected, aside from a provision for her servants, my mother-in-law left everything she had, her own jewelry and that which she had inherited from Queen Alexandra, to her two daughters. She appointed King George to act as her sole executor, which was good news for the estate but tragic news for the sharks and jewelers of Paris who naturally

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hoped to see their favorite victim in charge of that valuable property. Little as she knew about money matters, the old Empress understood that there was no man in the entire world less capable of fighting with the polished gangsters of the Rue de la Paix than her gray-haired son-in-law Alexander.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

"ANIMA NATURALITER CHRISTIANA"

I

FRIENDS whose opinion I respect warned me against writing this chapter. "You will be ridiculed," they said. "You must realize that nobody is interested in your inner experiences. Write about Palaces and Royalty and your various adventures, but for Heaven's sake not a word about spiritualism. It's just as boring as technocracy and not nearly so awe-inspiring. Better tell another story dealing with the fate of the Romanoff jewelry. Pretend you were lunching at the Colony in New York or, better still, at the Everglades Club in Palm Beach, and suddenly saw a woman at an adjoining table wearing the pearls of your wife. Wouldn't it be thrilling?"

I suppose it would. The trouble is that I have never seen such a woman and that I wouldn't recognize my wife's pearls even if I were to look at them from now until the End of the Depression. Neither do I feel like shedding tears over the Palaces-That-Were. Nothing would please me more than to spend the rest of my life in a country where every house is brand-new and no inhabitant pos-

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sesses ancestors. And as for the ridicule, I am not afraid of it; no Christian is of that Devil of the atheists. One is always somebody's ridiculous ass. I was—at every important moment of my own and my country's history: In 1902 when I predicted war with Japan and was insisting on building the second track of the Trans-Siberian. In 1905 when I thought the Romanoffs must either clear out or challenge the Revolution to a decisive fight. In 1916 when I advised the Czar to throw the British Ambassador out of Russia and replace the slackers of the St. Petersburg garrison with the picked troops of the Imperial Guard and the "Wild" Caucasian Cavalry Division. In 1919 when I bet the members of the American Delegation in Paris that within the next twenty years nothing would be left of the Treaty of Versailles and that the Soviets were to endure in Russia. In 1923 when I wrote in a French newspaper that the last had not been heard of the Hohenzollerns.

I must admit that it is distinctly gratifying to be considered ridiculous by the generation which produced the authors of the Eternal Peace Treaty in Washington and the staunch champions of the rights of China in Geneva.

To begin at the beginning, I would have to go back to the year of my imprisonment by the Bolsheviks in the Crimea. Naturally enough, I had every reason to doubt

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that I would ever be at large again. It seemed just a question of a few weeks more or less. I hated to die but there was nothing I could do to prevent my wardens from shooting me at their pleasure. My family and the two elder Grand Dukes, Nicholas and Peter, thought we ought to pull the few remaining strings, such as writing letters to a former friend who happened to have influence with the Soviets or appealing to the heads of the Scandinavian Governments, but that was plain rot. What little history I knew was sufficient to make me understand that the extermination of each and every member of the Imperial Family simply had to head the list of the Do's of the Revolution. We may have been quite harmless but so was Marie Antoinette. Years before the revolution I read several articles by Trotzky printed in a Kieff newspaper and I remembered now that he displayed in them a profound knowledge of the history of the French Revolution. It seemed unlikely that he would repeat the mistake of the Jacobins and let the Russian counterparts of d'Artois and d'Orléans escape.

This settled, I had to look for something with which to fill my remaining hours. My mother-in-law loathed bridge and I was afraid to play with the two elder Grand Dukes. Friendly as were our relations on the surface, it would have taken much less than a four bid on a slam hand to make me tell Grand Duke Nicholas what I thought of him as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies and

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the Czar's political adviser. He in turn would, no doubt, have let me hear his valuation of my talents, which was very low indeed.

And so we stayed away from the bridge table. The elder Grand Dukes played an endless game of sixty-six with their wives. My mother-in-law read the Bible. My wife spent her days with the children. I was left alone in my study. Facing me were long shelves of books. Navy books and numismatic books. Neither of these subjects could have been of the least interest to me at that time. My wardens and would-be executioners were sailors, which showed how little I learned about the navy from my books, and I wished I could forget my collection of coins because otherwise I would have been thinking of Turkey, Asia Minor, Palestine and all the other countries where I had spent some of the happiest hours of my life. I just sat and brooded. "Ifs," all sorts of "ifs" were hammering on my brain. What would have happened to me if, instead of returning to Russia in 1893, I had stayed in New York and played Jerome Bonaparte? Would it have made any difference if I had managed to overcome my contempt for Rasputin and tried to fight his influence in a more subtle manner? Would I have been able to keep Nicky from abdicating had I rushed to his side the very first day of the mutiny in St. Petersburg?

From the place where I usually sat, in front of an open window, I could see the two sailors posted at the front en-

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trance to the house and the sight of the hand grenades attached to their belts helped me to sift my "ifs." One by one, I dismissed all "ifs" dealing with Russia in general, with Nicky and his children, with my brothers and my family. There was no point in pretending to myself that anything else mattered to me except the fact that I myself was about to disappear from this world. I looked in the mirror. I touched my face. I straightened up. It seemed impossible that the human being I called myself could really cease to exist. I was still comparatively young. I still liked good wines. I still admired women. Why should I die and become nothing?

I struck a match, held it close to the palm of my left hand for a moment, then blew it out. The match died but the energy it embodied did not go to waste: I felt my left hand warm now. This was reassuring although there was nothing new in the experiment itself, nothing that could add even an iota to the physical law of the transformation of energy. I suddenly thought of my old teacher of physics and a feeling of bitterness came over me. I resented the arrogance of science. What was it that made those conceited asses claim that the only energy capable of going to waste was the energy contained in a human being? The next moment I realized that I myself was talking like an ass, for no soil is as fertile as the soil of a cemetery. I recalled the magnificent last page of Zola's *La Terre*: the description of that stupendously tall wheat which was

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growing in a field formerly occupied by the village cemetery. Warmth from a match. Tall wheat from Grand Duke Alexander. Logic was there, all the way through, but it was the logic of scientists. The obvious thing to do was to stop thinking in terms of science.

I envied my mother-in-law. Her implicit faith in the truthfulness of every word written in the Good Book gave her something stronger than mere courage. She was ready to face her Maker; she was certain of her own righteousness; didn't she always say, "God's wishes shall be fulfilled"? Her technique was fascinating in its simplicity. I wished I could adopt it but there was no way of doing it unless I was willing to accept all that went with it. Bishops. Cathedrals. Miraculous ikons. Official Christianity with its hypocritical doctrine of the sinfulness of flesh. I knew I might be shot within the next five minutes but so long as I could still see the white sail of a fisherman's boat on the horizon and smell the odor of the lilacs underneath the window I refused to agree that the earth was but a mammoth valley of tears. The earth I knew was ever joyful, perhaps because I never went inside a church to commune with God but stayed in my Crimean vineyards, grateful for the deep-red richness of the grapes, thrilled with the realization that I possessed it, all of it, as far as my eyes could reach, the vineyards, the gardens, the fields, the mountains.

My learned elder brother called me "pantheist" but this

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word suggested the stuffiness of libraries, cringy old men bent over their treatises. Whichever "ist" I was, I worshiped Life in all its forms and expressions. The biting Moscow winters. The stillness of the tropical night on Ceylon. The misty blue fogs over the Golden Gate. The solemn vastness of Sydney harbor. The shrieking voice of Constantinople. And that September afternoon in New York when, driving through Central Park, I saw the windows of the Savoy Hotel set afire by the sunset.

It was strange that a man about to die should become enthused over the transitory beauty of a far-away past but it was thanks to those moments of ecstasy experienced by me years ago that sitting in my chair, in front of the open window, and watching my two heavily armed wardens, I suddenly discerned the radiant face and the blessing smile of my God. Not the threatening Jehovah of Job. Not the gloomy Lord of that stuttering vandal Paul. But the Symbol and Sum of a joyful universe, of life's splendors.

"There is no death," I said to myself, "there is no final parting. The ties between me and that which I loved with the jealous intensity of a possessor shall never be severed. I shall always remain I, kept in this world by that same energy which made me plant my gardens and feel a sensuous thrill when I buried my face in a branch of lilacs. It is not the things I really loved that I shall be separated from, only from those which were indifferent or loathsome."

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My thoughts were naïve, perhaps tainted with hysteria natural under the circumstances. But I was on the right track. Had my imprisonment lasted a few months more, I would have reached the warp and woof of the Law of Love. As it was I was pulling at its fringes.

3

Five years passed. Once more I was leading the life I was taught to consider proper and unavoidable.

Three meals a day. White wine at luncheon. A pint of champagne at dinner. Paris in the fall. Riviera in the spring. Seaside in the summer. Newspapers. Small chatter. Money troubles. Ever increasing "ifs." Sighs. New acquaintances suspiciously resembling the old ones by the absence of mutual interests. "That pathetic Grand Duke" written in their faces. "What bores, what frightful bores"—the only thought in my mind.

I did not entirely forget my peculiar Crimean experience but I feared to rehearse it. The tradition of our family had it that my grand-uncle Emperor Alexander I had ruined his life through his interest in spiritualism. The people who originally put that legend into circulation must have been the same sacred cows of liberalism who said that modern machinery brought happiness and that all men were equal under Democracy, but in the first years of my exile I was rather subdued by the sacred cows of lib-

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eralism. I even sat once through a long lecture of a celebrated Italian historian who proved to everybody's satisfaction that Mussolini was the arch-enemy of humanity because he would not let the peasants sell their votes to the highest bidder.

"You must keep your feet on terra firma," I advised myself. "No more nonsense. This is the age of enlightened and triumphant science."

Then I went to spend a Saturday in Deauville. Deauville was terra firma. Olive-skinned young men in double-breasted dinner jackets kept a death-watch over the diamond necklaces of English dowagers. High-voiced, crimson-lipped New York chorus girls were explaining to their undersized native escorts that in America everyone must work. The Prince of Wales was playing in the *privée* surrounded by a bevy of husky Pennsylvania millionaires who could not understand why their Royal friend should refuse their offer to stake him to the bank. An elderly Maharanee sat across the table from the Prince, a large mother-of-pearl turtle covering her tall stacks of chips. Each time she was given her cards, she rubbed the head of the turtle, closed her faded black eyes, mumbled a short prayer and only then opened the cards. She was winning. In the ball-room the music was playing, possibly in honor of the Maharanee, the American fox-trot version of Rimsky-Korsakoff's "Song of India." About us the air reeked of perfumed humans and stale champagne. Over and above the

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whining saxophones I could hear the shrill giggling of two famous American vaudeville dancers, thick-lipped, middle-aged women of striking ugliness.

I went to the bar. It was less suffocating there and the white coats of the stewards looked refreshingly clean. I was about to order a long strong drink when an irresistible urge for solitude seized me. I ran out of the Casino and made for the beach. A cold drizzling rain was falling steadily but there was no one around and the smell of the sea was pleasant. Salt and fish. No perfume, no powder, no hair tonic. It was quite dark under the tent of the deserted boardwalk café. Stumbling against the pyramids of overturned tables I picked a chair, settled down, lighted a cigarette and listened to the fog horns. The captain of that Dover-bound steamer must have been quite a man. The cleverness with which he was zigzagging through the fog made me feel happy. I thought it would be a good idea not to return to the Casino at all. Then I heard a voice coming from behind.

"Not so attractive in the Casino?"

"Pretty scummy," I agreed.

The stranger spoke French with a slight foreign accent. It was difficult to guess his nationality. He might have been a South German or an Austrian.

"Lost much?" he asked me after a silence.

"No. I never play. And you?"

"Neither do I," he said with a quiet laugh.

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I went on smoking. I wished he would go.

"Like this sort of life?" he asked after another silence.

"Not quite."

"But still live it?"

"What can I do?"

"Lots."

"For instance?"

"Stop fooling yourself, for one thing. Your days are getting shorter. Benefit by whatever sunshine there is left."

Must be a crank, I thought.

"You seem to know me," I said aloud.

"I do."

"Do I know you?"

"You did at one time."

I laughed.

"You sound like the spirit of my misspent past."

"Or of your bitter future."

"Don't rub it in, sir. It's bad enough as it is."

"Whose fault is it?"

"I concede the point."

"That's the best you ever did. Trying to see all sides, too many sides, and conceding points."

"Right again. What would you? The fate of all diletanti."

"Too tired to love and too blasé to hate, that's what you mean!"

"My dear sir, do not criticize, I pray. Lead!"

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"Stuff and nonsense! No one can lead a man who thrives on self-pity."

"Self-pity?"

"Yes, self-pity. It thrills you to think of yourself in the third person, as a Great Martyr of the age, as a silent hero who lived through the suicide of an Empire. Can't you see anything else in your sufferings except a vehicle for self-pity and self-glorification? Don't you discern a warning, a lesson?"

"What do you expect me to do? To preach humility and all other virtues that I myself have never exercised?"

"It is for you to answer this question. You must decide for yourself and by yourself whether there was in your experiences something that is of value, of significance. Think back. Think of what was most precious to yourself. Money? You never cared for it. It never helped you. Power? You always avoided it. Family and friends? In your heart you never stopped feeling that they were strangers. Religion? You never embraced any. Were you to die now, what particular moment of your life would you be thinking about? This is the acid test of values; not what excites you when you are well and alive, but what makes you tremble with tenderness when you are dying. Would you be thinking of your palace in Russia? Of the straight arrow of the Champs-Élysées? Of the day you got married? Of the day you were made an admiral?"

"God, no!"

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"What is it then?"

Galloping through my life, through victories and defeats and thrills and bitterness, I came to a morning fifty years back.

"I have it!" I exclaimed. "The Caucasus. That slope of the mountain back of my father's house. I am lying in the tall grass watching the flight of a lark. All is peace around me and in me. Peace and silence and contentment. When I look down I can see the lawns of our garden. There are figures moving there too. I cannot see their faces but I can see the white blossoms of cherry trees and the moving red carpet of roses. I love it, I am in love with the entire world. You hear me?"

There was no answer. I jumped up and looked around. I could see nothing but darkness. I struck a match: I had been alone amidst the pyramids of overturned tables and chairs.

4

"It's a case for alienists. Only unbalanced people see spirits and talk to them."

This remark of my scientific friends was to become a staple feature of the following few years of my life. This and—

"Why don't you write your memoirs and make some money in America instead of wasting your time on books that nobody wants to read?"

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And—

“Well, are you still tipping tables?”

It was a fortunate thing for me that I was an old hand at being ridiculed. The hazing administered to me by the liberal newspapers and politicians of Imperial Russia had thickened my skin and made it quite easy for me to weather the jokes of my delightful acquaintances in Paris and Biarritz. I never bothered to explain to them the difference between spiritualism and the turning of tables. One does not quarrel with ignorance. To the American collectors of human oddities I used to say: “Nothing in it for you. It does not land on the front pages and could never make money. Just hopeless. Better concentrate on surrealism, nudists and the Five-Year Plan. Or go to Brussels and get yourself photographed with that explorer of the stratosphere. The rotogravures will eat it up. It will last you from the Horse Show until the May Presentations to the Court.”

The writing of my books proved more difficult. I did not possess words, but words possessed me. When I started to write, I thought I would write in French, it being my best language of the four, but then I switched to English, feeling that it would enable me to gain in clearness what I would miss in eloquence. The manuscript of my first book (*The Union of Souls*) completed, I knew no publishers in England or America and it was much easier for me to arrange the publication of my book in France. I did not

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expect it to sell and in order not to cause disappointment and losses to anyone else, I simply took it to a printer and paid his bill out of my pocket. The people to whom I mailed the copies—mostly my relatives—said it was frightfully dull and thoroughly ridiculous. Only three persons gave me encouragement: my secretary, a Russian lady whom I had known for years, and a Swiss lecture manager. The last must really have liked my book because he asked me to come to Switzerland and deliver several lectures. Had he been an American, I would have suspected it was my title that attracted him: a Russian Grand Duke discussing spiritualism compares favorably with Snyder the Talking Ape in the box office. But Switzerland never paid much attention to resplendent titles. It always relied on the postcard prettiness of its lakes and catered to the less publicized clients, honeymooners and sentimental tradesmen.

I was to lecture in Zurich which necessitated still another translation of my book, this time into German, a language I had not spoken since 1914. I felt grateful for the severity of my tutors who had spared no punishment in impressing upon me the overwhelming importance of German grammar. When I heard myself addressing my audience in German, I very nearly said:

"Stehen auf die Frage wessen
doch es ist nicht zu vergessen

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dass die diese letzte drei
auf der Dativ richtig sei,”

which is, of course, one of the many rules of declension contained in German grammar and put into poetical form by my old tutors.

While I talked—my lecture lasted fifty-five minutes—I tried not to look at the faces of the audience. For the first time in my life I was standing on a platform and addressing people I had never met before. When all was over and I suggested that my listeners ask me questions, a message was brought to me by the attendant of the hall. It read: “I have come all the way from Berlin to hear you but you wouldn’t even look at me. P.S. You did get mixed up in your tenses in the concluding part of your speech. It should have been ‘*wurde* für Ende Juli festgesetzt,’ not ‘war’ . . .”

Only then I raised my eyes and recognized the smiling, ruddy face of my old friend, a well-known German archæologist, in the first row. I had seen him last in 1911 in Trebizond where he was in charge of an expedition financed by me. Midnight found us still endeavoring to tell each other all that had happened to us on the road from Trebizond to Zurich. He could not conceal his amazement. To him, as to all Germans, it seemed unbelievable that Royalty could wind up by lecturing in Switzerland, in a “common hall.” The fact that I was a Romanoff did not



International News Photo

IVAR KREUGER

"A victim, possibly. . . . A scapegoat, probably. . . . But not a crook. . . ."



International News Photo

MYRON T. HERRICK

" . . . Politics being what they are, it is quite astounding that men of his caliber are permitted to serve their country at all"

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matter so much; it was the idea that my mother belonged to the "Great House of Baden" which made him sigh and shake his head.

"Who could have thought! Who could have thought!" he repeated over and over again.

"Don't grieve so much," I said, "better tell me what you think of the subject of my lecture."

Well, that was simple enough. The Russians had always been a race of madmen. He was convinced that no Hohenzollern could or would lecture on such a crazy subject. History? Yes, by all means. Political philosophy? Perhaps, although he did not think it advisable for Royalty to lower themselves to the level of retired presidents and heart-broken ex-prime ministers. But spiritualism? He refused to take it seriously. As an older man and a former beneficiary of my "generosity," he felt it his duty to warn me.

"You must think of your future," he said, and I ordered another bottle of Moselwein.

5

I *was* thinking of my future. Incessantly. Although not certain as yet of my ability to find adequate expression for what was so clear to myself, I went ahead with my work. Several books followed in rapid succession. Printed at my own expense, they mirrored my ideas as they were at that

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time, chaotic in their sincerity and sincere in their chaos. I did not have to please the publishers or entertain the public. I was writing them for myself and the very few people who cared to read them. Were they to remain just manuscripts in the drawer of my desk, I would not have been able to judge them from a detached point of view. A manuscript stands for the present; a printed book symbolizes the past. When I sit at my typewriter, it is always "I."

"I am writing it."

"I must not forget to look up that French word."

"I hope I am making it clear."

But when the book arrives from the printers and I turn its pages, it immediately becomes "He." A stranger I knew at one time. Great many passages displease me. I make a wry face and say: "Poor job. It lacks clearness. It is hopelessly involved. It should never have been expressed in that way."

With each succeeding book I was becoming more engrossed in my subject and less sure that I could do it justice. What was exciting as a thought, convincing as a vision, looked hopelessly dogmatic on the printed page. I re-read the books written by the prominent English and French spiritualists and saw that they too, although much better craftsmen, were struggling with an unsolvable problem. They too failed to find words that would ring true and recreate the fervor of an inner experience. The Law of Love when put on paper sounded like a doctrine of

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intolerable visionaries or a conglomerate of platitudes. With the exception of a few novelists who completely misunderstood the nature and the purposes of the practice of spiritualism, no writer who tackled this subject has succeeded in bringing out that unique combination of ultra-realistic facts and religious ecstasy which characterizes a bona fide spiritualistic experiment. Sir Oliver Lodge is too conscious of the objections of his scientific colleagues, while the late Conan Doyle had spent himself in the marshes of his quasi-spiritualistic parlance.

It saddens me that I hesitate to relate one particular experience of mine which occurred in the summer of 1925, in the Mena Hotel outside Cairo, while I was on my way to Abyssinia, but I know it would serve no purpose save to provide a laugh for American book reviewers. Never before and never since have I been given such a convincing proof of the full-blooded truthfulness of spiritualism. For fifteen minutes by the clock I talked to someone who had been very dear to me in my youth and who came because of my anguish. There was no medium present on that occasion, no paraphernalia customary for a séance, no "experts" to interpret and interfere. Just a few friends mildly interested in my experiments.

We were sitting in a room overlooking the desert and so strong was the light of a full moon that we could see the faces of the people in the court below. The figure of the spirit was plainly visible and the voice quite audible. No

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mistake could have been made as to her identity. She spoke Russian with that same odd, inimitable accent which was peculiarly her own in the days when she was still among us.

"Oh, this light is so painfully strong"—those were her first words. Then she began to talk and talked steadily for several minutes, interrupted just once by a friend of mine who insisted on getting an "additional" proof. He asked her something he knew no one but myself and she could have answered. She felt sorry for him. He was, she said, a slave of that most intolerant of all religions—Skepticism. Then she went on, talking about Egypt and our surroundings.

"But what is it that we call 'death'?" I asked. "What will happen to me after I am pronounced 'dead'?"

"You shall cease to notice the passing of time," she said. "There is no time where I am."

"But aside from that, will I still remain I?"

"For ever and ever."

"Will I be able to meet those whom I have lost?"

"If you really loved them, you will. But if you were attached to them by the ties of a forced conventional affection, you will not. They are where I am, all of them, but I can recognize only a few of them."

"Is that the reason why I never hear from the others but always succeed in communicating with you?"

"It is."

Then she disappeared. As suddenly as she had come. We

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went on the balcony and stayed there for the rest of the night. The Cook's guides were scurrying to and fro in the moonlit court below getting out of beds a large party of elderly Englishwomen who had come to watch the Sunrise in the Desert.

6

Once a year, returning home from my morning stroll in the Bois, I would find a group of hard-chewing young men waiting for me in my apartment. It usually happened in the early summer when the scarcity of European news made the American correspondents in Paris rediscover the existence of Grand Duke Alexander. Our conversation never varied.

"Want to make a statement?"

"About what?"

"Oh, things in general. Situation in the Far East. Red Terror in Russia. Will there be another war in Europe? What do you think of the American girls? Two hundred words will do."

The whole thing never took more than ten minutes. It had been agreed between us years ago that I was to express alarm about the situation in the Far East, register my protest against the continuation of the Red Terror in Russia, predict the imminence of a war between Italy and Yugoslavia and make a gallant remark or two about the Diana-like figure and Minerva-like brains of the modern Ameri-

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can girl. I loathed that Diana-and-Minerva metaphor but they said it went over big in the Middle West. The exact wording of my statement did not matter because, in the first place, it was up to the rewrite man to decide what I really thought of the American girl and, in the second place, no paper was going to use it anyway. The idea was to keep the home office from raising Cain. My statement typed, they would say "Thank you" and rush back to Harry's in the Rue Daunou. I would empty the ash-trays and proceed with my work. Nothing could have been fairer than this altogether pleasant arrangement. It kept my name on the files of Western Union and it reminded me to inspect my summer wardrobe. Even my valet came to know that the visit of the American correspondents meant that my flannel trousers should be sent to the cleaner.

Thus it shocked me considerably to see an assortment of large feet on my writing table when I returned home one morning in the spring of 1927.

"Don't tell me the Soviets have elected me the Czar of the Third Internationale," I said, entering the room.

"We want a statement," was the answer.

I felt flattered. Two statements per year! The scales were lifting!

"The situation in the Far East, complicated as it is by—" I began but was not permitted to go farther.

"Nothing doing! Can it. We want a real statement. No

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kidding this time. We were told that you talked to the spirit of the late Czar. Let's have it."

I demurred. I liked to oblige them but one had to draw a line somewhere.

"Sorry, boys," I said. "Quote me on any subject you wish, including the United States of Europe and the Refreshing Simplicity of American girls but cut out spirits."

"So, no statement?"

"No statement."

They left disgruntled. In due time a clipping arrived from America advising me that

TALKED TO THE CZAR'S SPIRIT SAYS FORMER GRAND DUKE, etc.

I remained silent. I knew better than to try to deny anything printed in the American papers.

Then things began to happen. A man in North Carolina wrote to say that he would be interested to have me as his winter guest because he always "liked spirits." A Chicago physician mailed me his booklet entitled: *Psychoanalysis as Cure for Insanity*. A Women's Club in Iowa was willing to pay me "two hundred in cash" and provide me with "hotel-and-Pullman accommodations" if I would cross the ocean and talk to the Czar in their presence. A Brooklyn gentleman warned me that no "tricks" of mine could alter "the determination of the rising masses of the world." And a Los Angeles realtor sent a letter consisting of just one

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line: "Communing with spirits? Then you would love Southern California."

The two boys responsible for this fireworks of idiocy said I ought to be grateful to them. "The first thing you know," they explained, "the Lucky Strike people will be on your heels. Nothing succeeds like success in America. Sky's the limit."



CHAPTER TWELVE

"POTSDAM U. S. A."

I

NOTHING is so useful to an exile as his hard-earned ability to recite the Cinderella story in reverse. It fed the Duke of Orléans during his stay in America. It carried King Louis XVIII through his lean years in London. It landed many a Russian refugee of the 1920's behind the counter of a department store. The number of ways in which it can be exploited by an impoverished aristocrat is really astounding. According to my relatives, none is more degrading than lecturing on spiritualism—a somewhat debatable point of view but one which prompted me to accept the long-standing offer of a New York lecture bureau in the summer of 1928. When in doubt, I always make a decision distasteful to my relatives.

"You are crazier than a March hare," was their parting blessing, and the sound of that word "March" made me prick up my ears. It was in the month of March of the year of grace 1917 that, acting against the advice of every one of my brothers, cousins and nephews, I refused to sign the famous "waiver of all claims" stuck in the faces of the

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Romanoffs by the Provisional Government. Not that I wanted the throne for myself or my children. God forbid. I simply thought that a man does not cease to be his father's son just because a bunch of slackers threaten him with a firing squad. The fact that eleven years later, on the eve of my departure for America, I turned out to be the only surviving Grand Duke without High Ambitions or Inspiring Message for the 160,000,000 Russians proved to my relatives that I was lacking in both brains and patriotism.

"Fifteen years after!" I caught myself repeating this phrase over and over again aboard the *Leviathan*.

"You mean 'Twenty Years After,' " said my well-read secretary who knew his Dumas by heart.

No, I meant fifteen, for just fifteen years had passed since I last visited the United States. When I left New York in the late summer of 1913, Wall Street was still borrowing money in London and "J. P. Morgan & Co." was still only the name of a banking firm, not the Taj-Mahal of the Western world. I was not afraid of changes. The more the merrier. I was afraid of myself. I doubted my ability to fit into the picture of the new America. Judging by the hard-drinking young women I used to meet around Paris and Biarritz, since the war the Americans had taken what they considered a step forward but what looked to me to be a step backward, right into the past of pre-war Europe. Midwestern accents in the Ritz

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Bar, discussing Proust and Freud, made me think of Russia in the early 1900's. It was saddening to realize that the robust viciousness of the America I had known and admired had given place to the sickening self-consciousness of an hysterical idealism. I was ready to admit that perversion is a convenient conversational topic among strangers without mutual interests, but I was rather disappointed that the Americans should revive what had become commonplace in Europe long before the days of motor-cars.

Sitting now in the smoking room of the *Leviathan* and listening to the chatter around me, I felt transplanted thirty years back, into the Guards Barracks in St. Petersburg. Same hodgepodge of badly digested ideas, same sparkling of eyes at the mention of some dull people widely advertised because of their sexual peculiarities, same curtsying before the Great Headliners, be they Hindoo mountebanks, Wall Street stock manipulators, highly successful French dressmakers or brilliant German mathematicians. So this was the American share of the Versailles spoils! It seemed bewildering that any nation should send two million men across the ocean, fight for something that did not concern it in the least, tear up the map of the world and lend billions of dollars to its competitors—all for the sole purpose of acquiring the worst traits of pre-war Europe, but the material at hand afforded no other conclusion. The material at hand was some eight hundred Americans aboard the *Leviathan*. Suspicious Easterners and

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snobbish Southerners, eloquent Westerners and shrieking Middle Westerners, stockbrokers and dry-goods buyers, dowagers and gold-diggers, writers and politicians, school-teachers and card sharks, a gathering unmistakably representative of the changing characteristics of a nation.

Had I been going on a visit, I should have said, British-like: "Oh, well, after all, this is none of my concern." But I was a lecturer now, a man paid to please and entertain his audiences. I feared that in order to please and entertain the new brand of Americans I should have to pose as a Russo-German neurasthenic of the early 1900's, as a guinea pig of garrulous psychologists and quasi-philosophers.

"You must realize," said a beautiful young woman at my table, who blushed when her husband admitted that he liked Galsworthy, "that we Americans have come of age. We have developed within the last ten years our own intelligentsia."

Intelligentsia! How well I knew the sinister record of that word! It had suffocated Russia and Germany. It had sapped the strength of England. It had turned Scandinavians into boresome maniacs. It had suffered but one single defeat since the day it had crept into the speech of Europe. Only the cold lucidity of the French genius was able to shake off its poisonous effects. But that was France, the country which had always come victorious out of its battles with words, which had managed to transform even the three-headed monster of Liberty-Equality-Fraternity into

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a mere decorative frontispiece for its banks, police stations and jails. The protective mechanism of France was not to be found anywhere else. America would have to live at least five hundred years more to develop that enlightened indifference which safeguards the French against the ravages of sinister words. I saw small hope for America. It was clear to me that in the course of her European adventure she had lost not only her money but likewise that vigorous simplicity of a lone elephant which had carried her through the jungles of the nineteenth century. She may have scored a victory at Château-Thierry but it was a victory over her own future: she ceased to be America. Then she went to Versailles, to witness the distribution of prizes to her allies and to receive for herself a small package of old European clothes and discarded European ideas.

2

The only remaining bit of America-That-Was awaited me at Quarantine. It was cheerful to discover that immigration inspectors and ship reporters had lost none of their virility.

"Give us a smile, Alexander."

"Say, what about that dame on Long Island who says she is an eighteen-carat Romanoff?"

"Raise your hand and swear that you are not a believer in polygamy and that while in this country you will do

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nothing to undermine the existence of organized government."

"Ever been in jail? Possess sixty dollars on your person?"

I felt fifteen years younger. True enough, it reflected in the character of my smile—the camera man insisted that a "heartbroken nobleman" should smile "sort of sad"—but otherwise I got along fine with my old friends of the New York press and the Labor Department. When I was finally dismissed by them, I was reluctant to go ashore and exchange their invigorating company for the vast conglomerate of anonymous faces known as the Borough of Manhattan.

I was not alone by then. I had for guide my son Dimitry who had preceded me by four years in his flight from Europe. A mere child at the time of the revolution, he had experienced no difficulty in unlearning what his parents had taught him. His rapid-fire conversation on the way to my hotel disclosed his thorough New Yorkism. He felt proud of his City of Six Millions and rejoiced in his ability to make an independent living. A forty-dollar-a-week bank clerk, he talked as if he personally were responsible for the building of the newest skyscraper. He promised to take me around and I had to remind him that I was not exactly a novice in New York.

"Why," I said, "do you realize, my boy, that as early as in eighteen-ninety-three . . ."

The date amused him. He laughed.

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"It will take you a bit of time to get acclimatized," he said patronizingly, "but I am sure you'll like it. Most Europeans do. You can get in touch with me at the bank every day between ten and five. Should anything puzzle you, let me know . . ."

I promised I would. Nothing puzzled me much except that in just five days I was expected to deliver my first lecture.

"Opening December fourth Grand Rapids," read the radiogram of my manager and this frightened me. My American friends in Paris thought my English was "perfect" but they never had to pay to hear me speak it. Then there was the matter of finding the appropriate key in which to talk. When I wrote my lecture in Paris, every word in it sounded true, but that was before I spent six days aboard an American ship. Looking through a window of my room at a busy corner of Madison Avenue, I wondered what those hurrying men and women were like. Perhaps, I said timidly, some of them might be different from those I watched in the smoking room of the *Leviathan*. If so, I was all right; if not, I was sunk. The trouble, as I saw it, was that I still knew nothing of the present-day "American Americans." I could have tried my lecture on my manager but his opinion did not interest me. He was accustomed to dealing with foreigners and, besides, he had made it clear from the very beginning of our negotiations that he merely wanted to bring back from Europe a "live"

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Grand Duke. In his heart he thought that I was either a madman or a fake or both. I opened my address book and glanced at the names of the people I knew in New York. International bankers of German descent, dictatorial dowagers with domiciles in Paris, polo players of the Prince of Wales' set, owners of yachts spending winters in the South Seas—not a sign of an "American American" in the whole lot, not a single one capable of advising me on the mental reactions of the people in Grand Rapids. True enough, there was the name of my old friend Charles M. Schwab under the "S" but it would have taken a greater courage than mine to ask him to put aside the affairs of the Bethlehem Steel Corporation and listen to a sermon on Happiness in Poverty. . . .

Nightfall found me still searching for an "American American" in the City of New York. The manager of the hotel was quite willing to sit through the ordeal of a lecture but, alas, his "w's" sounded not unlike my own: he hailed from Germany where his father had been employed as landscape architect by my late uncle the Grand Duke of Baden.

"I hate to think," he finally said with commendable frankness, "what His Imperial Highness would have said had he known that his nephew would become a lecturer."

"So do I," I answered, "but it does not bring us even an inch closer to the hearts of Grand Rapids."

I was about to give up in despair and let come what may



International News Photo

THE LATE DOWAGER-QUEEN ALEXANDRA OF ENGLAND

"When she first left her native Denmark, Disraeli was a struggling upstart and the best European strategists were predicting the victory of General Robert E. Lee"



International News Photo

THE LATE DOWAGER-EMPRESS MARIE OF RUSSIA

"She would not have swapped lives with her sister Alexandra of England for all the rajahs of India and all the diamonds of South Africa"

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when the telephone rang. Myron T. Herrick, American Ambassador to France and a lifelong friend of mine, was passing through New York on the way to his home in Cleveland.

"Eureka! I have found an American American," I shouted in lieu of greeting.

"Thanks for the kind words," said Herrick. "They certainly sound nice to one who has just been nicknamed the unofficial French Ambassador to the United States."

He was referring to the silly denunciations hurled at him by some of the newspapers who failed to grasp Herrick's shrewd way of handling the French and accused him of lack of Americanism.

"Tell me, old friend," I said in all seriousness, "do you believe that there can be Happiness in Poverty?"

"I do," replied Herrick, "but the U. S. Congress does not. And neither do the French."

We laughed. I naturally hesitated to ask him to sacrifice his free evening, but the moment I explained the nature of my predicament he volunteered to be my first audience. I have regretted few things in my life so much as the fact that I did not take down what Herrick told me that night. Although not a "brilliant conversationalist," in the sense that other celebrated American Ambassador Mr. Choate was, he possessed the supreme art of translating clear thinking into phrases of equally crystallized clearness. He dreaded platitudes not because he tried to be original at

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any cost, but because the long years spent by him in the councils of a great political party and in the diplomatic service made him weary of the solemnity of buncombe. It was saddening to think that a trivial incident of his business career—his connection with a concern that went into bankruptcy—had deprived him of the nomination for the Presidency but, looking at his elegant figure of a grand seigneur and listening to his remarks charged with delightful sarcasm, one realized that he was right in his determination to avoid the risks of a mud-slinging campaign. Politics being what they are, it is not surprising that men of Herrick's caliber should be denied the Great Prize of Democracy; in fact, it is quite astounding that they are permitted to serve their country at all.

He let me read my lecture to the very end. Several times I stopped and said sheepishly "You must be bored," but he shook his head and urged me to continue. When I finished, he looked at me for a moment as if seeing me for the first time and then began to laugh. This was unexpected. I did not intend to be humorous.

"Please do not be offended," he said, "but I cannot help it. The idea of your thinking that a lecture of this sort can appeal to the Americans is really funny. Now, let me give you a bit of cynical advice. I hate to tell you the truth but unless I do you are bound to be frightfully disillusioned."

He stopped laughing and his gay smile gave way to an expression of seriousness mixed with bitterness.

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"Understand one thing," he said. "Understand it now before it is too late. My countrymen are as curious as children and as intolerant as Spanish inquisitors. Methodists and Baptists, Catholics and Jews, none of them will be interested in your religion. They have their own and they all think theirs is the only right one. Take out everything dealing with your religion, put in its place the description of the Czarina's jewelry and the Czar's palaces. Tell them about diamonds and emeralds, rubies and sapphires, but for God's sake not a word about religion. You follow the papers, don't you? You have seen what happened three weeks ago to that countryman of mine who tried to appeal to tolerance, haven't you? Well, let it be a lesson to you."

This reference to the defeat of Alfred E. Smith coming from a republican of Herrick's prominence baffled me. I have made it a rule never to comment on the political life of the country that extends its hospitality to me and I knew that a reply to Herrick's speech would involve my breaking this self-imposed restriction. So I changed the subject and asked him whether he had already seen Lindbergh. The mentioning of his "godson's" name brought a smile back to his face. He was reluctant to credit his own incomparable strategy with the spontaneity of the French welcome to Lindbergh but the facts were stronger than his modesty: scarcely five weeks before the Lindbergh flight the anti-American feeling had reached its height in Paris, and a mob of hooligans had broken the windows of an

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American newspaper office in the Avenue de l'Opéra and torn up the American flag in the Boulevard Poissonière.

"How does an ambassador go about changing the hostile feelings of a nation?" I asked Herrick a bit maliciously, knowing he had made it a point to deny the very fact of anti-American demonstrations in Paris.

"The job is simple," said Herrick. "An ambassador must be patient and wait for the arrival of a Charles Lindbergh."

"And then?"

"Then he does well to provide the baggageless hero with a pair of pajamas . . ."

3

Much as I respected Herrick, I decided not to follow his advice. Not until I had delivered sixty-seven lectures and spent three winters in America, did I realize that he was right. I had made a mistake but my defeat was fruitful. In no other way could I have gotten rid of the main regret of my life. Had I agreed with my wise friend and accepted his verdict, I would simply have canceled my contract and gone back to Paris, still cursing my fate for having been born a Grand Duke, still regretting my failure to relinquish my title and settle in the United States years ago. Fortunately I was stubborn. Fortunately I had a sermon in my system. This brought me face to face with

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thousands of people, "American Americans" and others.

Some of them felt irritated: their daughters were married to European titles and the idea of a Grand Duke traveling around the country and mixing with Rotarians seemed to reflect on the standing of their sons-in-law. Some of them saw red: I dared to twist the tails of the sacred cows of liberalism and I openly expressed my preference for men of action. Some of them talked freely and disclosed their real convictions: democracy or no democracy, they needed the help of Sunday schools and churches to keep the masses in check.

I learned a lot. I met America and it changed my former estimate of the Empires. I used to reproach my relatives for their haughtiness, but I had never really known snobishness until I tried to seat a resident of Brookline, Massachusetts, and a Fifth Avenue millionaire at the same table. I used to be appalled by the unlimited power of the Man on the Throne, but even the most ruthless of all autocrats, my late father-in-law Emperor Alexander III, seemed distinctly shy and full of scruples when compared with the dictators of Gary, Indiana. I used to blush at the thought of the barbaric treatment reserved for the national minorities in Imperial Russia, but that was before I read the advertisements in the New York newspapers soliciting the services of "Gentile" office boys. I used to say that the habit of blaming their governments for each and every ill had cost the Europeans their place in the sun, but then I

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witnessed the gruesome spectacle of 120,000,000 Americans booing their President and clamoring for a miracle.

I was not disappointed: the discovery of truth, any truth, is invariably fascinating. But I did become less bitter in my denunciations of Europe. The thirty-five hundred miles of the Atlantic that appeared to be a frightful lot of water in the days of my youth dwindled to the size of a narrowish pond, with the people on both sides closely resembling each other in petty virtues and dominant vices, in the abandon of their hysteria and the recklessness of their hatreds. That silly billboard on the Boulevard des Italiens proclaiming that "the French must thank Uncle Shylock for their miseries" did not irritate me any more, for I saw another sign, placed on the road from Glendale to Pasadena which read "Our county is not able to repair its highways because the French do not pay their debt to the United States." This was as it should be. This battle of billboards was bringing the world back to "normalcy," to an era when the nations were speaking frankly and unreservedly, instead of permitting college professors to tell them how they should feel toward each other. It was, of course, nobody's fault but my own that I had to lecture on the Religion of Love and sleep aboard dusty Pullmans in order to discover that the Atlantic belonged to geography, but hatred belonged to humans.

To tell all would take volumes. It is not the task of a traveling lecturer to write the History of America's

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Transformation. He gathers his impressions wherever he goes and an evening spent in a New York speakeasy may sometimes be more revealing than a talk with Henry Ford. To a speakeasy I was brought by a party of friends, several rabbis among them, but to see Henry Ford I went alone. All of this happened in my post-Grand Rapids period.

4

Grand Rapids I shall not forget. It was my first "appearance" in America. I stayed awake all night, listening to the rattle of the train and ringing for the porter at short intervals.

"Will you bring me another pillow?"

"Does this ventilator work?"

"I want a glass of charged water."

I had three pillows hidden behind my handbags. I knew very well how to start the ventilator. And I was not thirsty. What I really needed was someone on whom I could try my "w's." I was not afraid of "th's" and the difference between the "ee's" and "i's" was clear to me. But "w's" frightened me. Non-existent in the Russian alphabet and pronounced as "v" by the Germans and the French, this perfidious letter haunted me. Myron Herrick thought there was nothing wrong with my "w's" but then he knew too many French Prime Ministers. On the other hand, my sleepy, colored porter struck me as being just the

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man to pass on my pronunciation. I watched his face eagerly. I expected to see him puzzled. I was pleasantly disappointed: he merely said "yes, sir" each time and brought me the article containing the "w." Getting off the train at Grand Rapids and feeling that the battle had been won, I tipped him lavishly.

"Everything was just right," I commended him.

He smiled and bowed.

"Merci beaucoup," he said courteously.

I stood still.

"Where did you learn French?"

"In France, sir. I danced in the Folies-Bergères for two seasons. That's why it is easy for me to understand foreigners."

On the way to the hotel I did not dare look at my secretary. He pretended he was reading a newspaper but his lips were twitching.

"Stop grinning," I said. "Let us hope that chap is not the only former tap dancer in America. Perhaps there will be a few in my audience tonight."

He passed me the newspaper:

"Read this."

I read the first three lines and then we both roared.

"A large gathering is expected tonight in the New Baptist Church where Grand Duke Alexander of Russia will deliver his lecture on . . ."

Not only was I always superstitious about everybody

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and everything connected with the Church but the bulk of my lecture dealt with "the bankruptcy of official Christianity." When my manager promised me "the surroundings of complete dignity" I thought he meant that I would not perform in a circus. How was I, or any European for that matter, to know that a church could be hired for a lecture? Had it been a Catholic church or a synagogue, I could at least have counted on the sense of humor of the clergy, but a Baptist church! I shuddered.

"We are in for it," said my secretary. "*Le vin est tiré.*"

He had an irritating habit of quoting French proverbs with the air of a man communicating the last will and testament of the Almighty.

The remaining three hours, which I had hoped to spend in grave thoughts, were consumed by visitors. Reporters came and asked my opinion about the illness of King George. I said it was most unfortunate. A man who used to live in Odessa brought his seven-year-old son and a cello. "Everybody" in Grand Rapids believed that the boy played better than Casals. Would I like to hear him? I had to. Then I signed a dozen autograph books, each one containing Tom Mix and the Khedive of Egypt. Then I posed for the local photographer and tasted a homemade apple pie, "the best apple pie ever baked east of the Rocky Mountains." Then my secretary tiptoed in and said in a tragic whisper: "The minister is waiting for us downstairs."

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The minister turned out to be a pleasant, vigorous man. His handshake and manner of speech made me doubt the authenticity of my ideas about Baptists. He could easily have passed for a New York stockbroker.

"Shall I ask him where we can get a bottle of brandy?" said my secretary in French.

"My secretary wonders," I translated to the minister, "if it is all right for me to lecture in a Baptist church? I have never been much of a churchgoer, don't you see?"

"It is never too late to reform," said the minister.

Just then we arrived and were shown into the vestry which my secretary insisted on calling "the dressing room."

The church was packed. The minister said there were eight hundred and fifty people in the audience but to me they looked like eight hundred and fifty thousand. Never in my life was I so frightened. When the minister said: "I have the great honor to present to you Grand Duke Alexander of Russia," my hands began to tremble and my throat was dry. I got up and was about to cross toward the center of the platform when I suddenly heard the opening bars of the Russian National Anthem and saw my audience rise to their feet. I stood aghast. For the first time in eleven years I was listening to that melody.

My secretary told me afterward that I went deathly pale. Personally I remember nothing. Sometimes I think I

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must have fallen asleep in my room in New York and dreamt that I was lecturing in the New Baptist Church in Grand Rapids. The local papers said that I talked "in a clear melodious voice, never showing an inkling of emotion or bitterness." I doubt it.

I have delivered sixty-six lectures more since that day. In churches, universities, women's clubs and private houses. I never disputed terms, place or time, insisting on just one clause in my contracts: that the Russian National Anthem must not be played, before, during or after my lectures. It is easy to live through the suicide of an Empire. It is deadly to hear its voice eleven years later.

5

I used to get piles of invitations whenever I was in New York. Not that people liked me or were unduly impressed with the reports about my lecture tour but because it is considered good form in the Borough of Manhattan to have a "tragic" Russian title squeezed between a British chap who knows what's wrong with American women and a German economist who is concerned about the future of the gold standard.

The three most interesting invitations of my American career arrived simultaneously. A group of prominent Hebrew leaders of New York wanted me to dine with them and discuss the so-called "Jewish question." The Army and

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Navy Club thought I should make an address on the Five-Year Plan. And some friends in Detroit were urging me to come and meet Henry Ford. I immediately accepted all three invitations, and thereby hangs the tale of three exciting days of my exile.

The "Hebrew dinner" took place in the private room of a speakeasy, it being the only oasis of good cooking and warm comradeship on the American continent.

"Don't you feel strange," laughingly asked the gentleman who presided at our table, "being the only Gentile, and a Grand Duke of Russia to boot, in the company of sixteen Hebrews, four of them rabbis?"

No, I did not feel strange, if for no other reason than that only a week before while in Minneapolis I had received a letter from the manager of a local restaurant assuring me that he would be extremely happy to serve me a "real kosher dinner."

"And besides," I said, "isn't it only natural that I, a representative of what was admittedly the most anti-Semitic régime in the world should meet you gentlemen and ask you—and what about the United States?"

"You must be joking," exclaimed my neighbor on the right, a well-known Brooklyn rabbi. "Surely you do not attempt to compare the systematic persecution of our race in Imperial Russia with the complete freedom and equality we are enjoying in the United States?"

"Freedom and equality!" I repeated slowly and won-

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dered why a man of his intelligence should want to shut his eyes on the truth. "Now tell me honestly, doctor, have you ever heard of a landlord of an apartment house in that much-maligned Imperial Russia refusing to accept a Hebrew as a tenant?"

"You are quoting something which exists in the snobbish section of Manhattan only," he said with a slight blush. "You cannot blame the entire nation for the arrogant stupidity of a few landlords."

"No," I answered, "I cannot and I do not intend to. But what about the so-called 'exclusive' colleges of America? Harvard and Princeton and Yale and many others, both in the East and on the Pacific Coast? Would you pretend that the boys of your race can enter those colleges on an equal basis with Gentiles? And what about your better clubs? Would you have me believe that there are no barriers separating the men of your race from becoming members of at least a dozen New York, Philadelphia, Boston and San Francisco clubs? I am mentioning these four cities only because I know more about them, not because the same situation does not exist in many other cities and towns."

"Well, it's like this," he said compromisingly, glancing at the other participants of the dinner. "Those colleges and clubs which you have in mind are not anti-Semitic. They are simply afraid, the progressive spirit of our race being what it is, that the complete absence of restrictions would

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create a difficult handicap for the Gentile candidates.”

I had to laugh. Unconsciously he was repeating the favorite argument of the leading anti-Semites in Russia.

“I begin to think,” I said, “that my grandfather Emperor Nicholas First was a much better Hebrew than you are because when the same argument was used by the Russian Generals against the admission of the Jews into his army, he simply said: ‘An Emperor of Russia cannot divide his subjects into Jews and Gentiles. He protects the loyal subjects and he chastizes the traitors. No other criterion should guide his decisions!’”

“Ah, but that was your grandfather!” exclaimed my cunning adversary. “But what about your late brother-in-law, the last Czar? I do not believe he has ever uttered anything as tolerant . . .”

“No,” I admitted. “His tolerance was not much broader than that of an American friend of mine, a wealthy gentleman in Texas, who advised me not to accept an invitation to dinner because my prospective hosts were Catholics!”

We argued for five hours. Three A.M. found us still closeted in the smoke-filled room of that comfortable speakeasy in the East Fifties, unable to agree and unwilling to concede each other even an inch of ground. We would have argued well into the morning if the proprietor had not finally knocked on the door and said that we must go.

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He bowed to no one in his respect for tolerance but there was such a thing as a curfew hour and he believed in obeying laws.

6

A still hotter debate awaited me at the Army and Navy Club. Its directors had taken it for granted that I would curse Soviet Russia and predict the imminent failure of the Five-Year Plan. This I refused to do. Nothing revolts me more than the spectacle of a Russian exile who lets his thirst for revenge overcome his spirit of national pride.

In talking to the members of the Army and Navy Club I made it clear that I was a Russian first and after that a Grand Duke. I described to them as best I could the unlimited resources of Russia and said that there was no doubt in my mind that the Five-Year Plan would succeed.

"It may take," I added, "a year or two more but in the long run not only will the Plan succeed but it will have to be followed by another Plan, possibly a Ten-Year or a Fifteen-Year Plan. Never again shall Russia consent to be the dumping ground of the world. Never again shall she depend on any foreign power for the development of her natural wealth. The Czars could never have accomplished a program of such magnitude because their perspective was clouded by too many scruples, diplomatic and others. The present rulers of Russia are realists. They are unscrupulous in the sense that Peter the Great was. They are as unscrupulous

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pulous as your railroad kings were fifty years ago and as your bankers are today, with the only difference that there is more personal honesty and unselfishness in their case."

It so happened that seated at the speaker's table, right by my side, was General ——, the descendant of a famous railroad magnate and a director of two score of corporations. When I finished amidst a rather puzzled applause, our eyes met. He thought I was a madman.

"A strange speech for one whose brothers were killed by the Bolsheviks," he said with an air of thorough disgust.

"You are quite right, General," I replied, "but then, we Romanoffs are a strange family. The greatest of us killed his own son because the latter tried to interfere with his Five-Year Plan. . . ."

For a moment he remained silent, then as an after-thought he asked: "But what would you advise us to do to parry that Danger?"

"I really don't know," I said. "After all, General, that is your lookout. I am a Russian, don't you see?"

In all fairness to the other members of the Army and Navy Club I must admit that when the first shock had blown over they came to shake hands with me and praised my "frankness" and "courage."

"Do you know what you have done today?" said the president of the club when I was leaving. "You have made a near-Bolshevik out of me. . . ."

"And what about me?" I returned. "I have done some-

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thing worse still to myself. I have forfeited my claims to the non-existent crown of Russia."

7

And then I met Henry Ford. When I saw him in his Dearborn domain, the Depression was still young and not all of the great reputations dead. He was still revered as America's major prophet, as a genius who had discovered the secret of perennial economic bliss.

My anticipation was keen. To me, as to most Europeans, he was a Symbol, a Legend, the Coat of Arms of the United States. I have always envied America her possession of Henry Ford. It seemed to me that the tag of nationality of the Man of Dearborn was helping the world-at-large to reach a clearer conception of the full meaning of the term "American." Perhaps because no other country has ever publicized its representative citizens to such an extent, a "Frenchman," an "Englishman," or a "Russian" does not create in the mind of a foreigner an immediate association with one particular name. But an "American" . . . This never fails: in ninety cases out of a hundred it evokes the image of Henry Ford. A peasant in far-away Siberia may profess his ignorance of the identity of George Washington but he will be certain to remember the name of that odd contraption which plows its way through the dust and mud of the country road. This being the case, it is only

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logical that the future of that Russian peasant should interest Henry Ford. He began our conversation by asking what I thought of the American "possibilities" in Russia. I answered that I considered them quite excellent but that the American manufacturers had failed so far to compete successfully with the aggressive salesmanship of the Germans.

"But the money," said Ford; "have they got the money?"

"No," I admitted, "there is no money in present-day Russia but there is and always will be a stupendous wealth of raw materials. I suppose you know it better than I do."

"I don't," he said with almost childish stubbornness. "All I know is that they haven't got the money. The General Electric people sold them some stuff and I hear they are having a pretty tough time trying to collect."

I felt amused. There was I, a man outlawed by the Soviet Government, fighting the cause of Communistic Russia against Henry Ford.

"How are you going to surmount this crisis," I asked him next, "if you continue to neglect the potential largest market of the world? Don't you think there is a depression in America today partly because you have insisted on ignoring the existence of one sixth of the earth's surface?"

"There is a depression in America today," said Ford, laying a somewhat sarcastic emphasis on the word "depres-

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sion," "simply because our people have become too soft. Why, look at our farmers . . ."

He got up, crossed toward the window, as if to get a better view of the America that was lying outside, and began to talk at great length about the necessity to promote the "back-to-the-land" movement and to "industrialize" farming.

At first I thought something must have happened to my hearing or that I simply could not understand his English. After what I had just seen in the course of my tour through the Middle West, it seemed incredible that anyone, least of all a man with Ford's instinct for realities, should advocate the increase of farming as a panacea for the ills of the country. Ridiculous as was the notion of an impoverished European giving a lesson in economics to an American billionaire, the attitude of my host made me forget the difference of our positions.

"You are all wrong!" I exclaimed with great feeling, and this brought an odd expression to Ford's ascetic face. He looked utterly puzzled, as if a high school boy had interrupted the delivery of His Holiness' encyclical with a silly remark. Then he smiled, a smile of pity and sympathy.

"Well," he laughed, "I must admit that is the first time in the last fifteen years that I have heard a man use the word 'wrong' in talking about me. So, I am wrong—am I?"

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He shook his head and was silent. In order to relieve the tension I asked him what he thought of my grand-nephew Prince Louis Ferdinand of Germany who was employed at that time in one of his factories.

"Nice fellow. Capable fellow," said Ford. "Want to see him?"

"I would love to," I answered. What I really wanted to say was that both the present employer of the young Prince and the latter's grandfather, the Kaiser, were adepts of the same imperial faith in the infallibility of a sovereign's judgment. A man cannot command an army of thirteen million soldiers or possess a billion dollars and not be "right," at least in his own estimation. To think that I had crossed the ocean and traveled all the way up to Michigan to find myself back in Potsdam. . . .

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"A LECTURER SEES IT THROUGH"

I

THE Associated Press dispatch read:

Grand Duke Alexander of Russia arrived in Hollywood today for a brief stay. Numerous Slavic inhabitants of this city who have based their chief claim to greatness on the fact that they were Aides in the Ducal suite, Generals in the Imperial Army and otherwise high in the Russian Court shenanigans discovered that they had to stay out of town for the next three days.

This surprised me. I had no intention whatsoever of checking up on anybody's claims. I took it for granted that everything grows fast on the rich soil of California, be it oranges or Russian titles. I came because my manager wanted me to and because I had always been a fervent motion picture fan. One star in particular attracted me, John Gilbert, which was only natural, considering that for many years he had been playing the parts of Russian Grand Dukes. I envied him. His gorgeous boyard costumes, his spectacular supper parties, the informality of his manner, the pair of graceful, unmuzzled tigers that followed on his heels, his dominant way with the beautiful ladies-in-

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waiting—all this awakened bitter memories of the strict regulations which made myself and my cousins wear plain uniforms, limited our choice of household pets to German dachshunds and Persian cats, and forced us to sleep on narrow, iron bunks so different from those luxurious triple beds constructed in Mr. Gilbert's apartments. "A Grand Duke of St. Petersburg meets a Grand Duke of Culver City"—I thought this would please even my manager who never stopped complaining that I interfered with his "promotion work." Unfortunately this epochal meeting never took place. By the time I had delivered my lectures in and around Los Angeles and got through with several "highly respected" lawyers who wanted to see me on the part of "someone" whom I "love very much," I had to catch my train for Denver and points east.

The mysterious "someone" turned out to be none other than Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, my late brother-in-law who had been shot by the Bolsheviks twelve years before near the city of Perm. There were four individuals in Los Angeles who claimed to be the "genuine" Grand Duke Michael. Three of them preferred to be represented by their lawyers, but the fourth came to see me in person. A plumpish man of about five-seven (my late brother-in-law stood six-three in his stockinged feet) he spoke with a strong Ukrainian accent and insisted on calling me "Your Holiness." He made up in courage what he lacked in height and knowledge of titles. His uniform—an

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exotic mixture of medieval Moscow and modern Culver City—was in itself a sight worth a visit to Los Angeles.

"You remember this uniform, Your Holiness," he exclaimed on entering my room.

I did. I had seen it last in Elinor Glyn's *His Hour*.

"How is my mother?" he inquired next.

"His mother" had been dead for two years.

He took this news bravely. Just touched his eyes with an enormous monogrammed handkerchief and said, "God bless her soul."

"The local papers don't go in much for international news," explained his escort, a white-haired, dignified person who looked like an old-fashioned president of a college.

I waited. I was in no hurry to throw them out; the primitiveness of their fakery made it thoroughly inoffensive.

"Some of the best people in this town are my closest friends," said the gentleman of many medals.

I waited again.

"They believe me implicitly but I thought a signed affidavit of Your Holiness might help me to disarm the enemies of the Romanoffs."

I said a few words in French to my secretary.

"You are not angry?" asked the escort.

"Not at all," I said. "I simply asked my secretary to bring his camera."

"A camera?"

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"Yes, a camera. I would like to take a photograph of your friend. I have quite a collection of men posing as Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich but I never saw anyone like him."

"I used to wear a beard," said the impostor timidly.

"That was wrong," I advised. "Never do it again. Just stay as you are."

"So you won't sign the affidavit?"

"Sorry, old man."

"I guess we'd better go," said the escort.

They left as they had come. Heads up, their courage undiminished, their faces reflecting straightforwardness and honesty. I hope for their sake that they are still being received by the "best people" in Los Angeles. In a world overridden by a passion for details they seemed to be the last Mohicans of the Theatre that was Theatre.

2

This also happened in Los Angeles.

"Say, what's your name, anyway?" asked a gentleman seated next to me at a luncheon during the course of which I had been addressed in turn as "Your Highness," "Excellency," and "Monseigneur."

"My name is Alexander."

"Alexander what?"

"Alexander nothing, just Alexander."

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"Now listen," he said impatiently, "let's get this matter straight . . . Didn't you folks have a last name of some description?"

I confessed that there was a last name in our family but that a well-established custom precluded our being addressed by that name. In order to make myself thoroughly understood I pointed out that while the intimate friends of the Prince of Wales may call him "David" or "Edward," he has never been referred to as "Mr. Windsor," so far.

My neighbor shook his head dubiously and remained silent for a while.

"Now then," he exclaimed suddenly, "let's suppose for argument's sake that my name is Johnny Walker. Would I be introduced to you as Mr. Johnny or as Mr. Walker?"

"You would be introduced to me as Mr. Walker, to be sure, but had that been my name I should have been introduced to you as Grand Duke Johnny."

"That settles it," he admitted gloomily. "You win."

It occurred to me later that I had no business contradicting him. This man, so firm in his belief that every human being should possess a last name, belonged to the rapidly vanishing species of Americans who remained immune to the feverish interest in royalty displayed by their contemporaries. I know of no kingdom nor empire where the worshiping of titles, blue blood, and glorified ancestors ever achieved the importance it enjoys at present in the United States.

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American Ambassadors to the Court of St. James's are being stampeded each spring by thousands of applicants anxious to curtsy before Their Britannic Majesties. American girls coming from every state in the Union spend several months in London and invest a small fortune in court dresses, etiquette teachers, and "presentation parties," while the ceremony itself lasts but a few moments.

American captains of industry appear to be highly pleased at seeing their names included in the Social Registers of their respective cities. American counsels for public relations, employed at high salaries, exercise a real control over the non-office hours of their bosses and conduct lengthy campaigns in order to secure for them a piece of ribbon denoting a foreign decoration.

American knowledge of the *Almanach de Gotha* is nothing short of miraculous. Judging by my experience, this dry and rather tedious book, dedicated to the family trees of the aristocracies, should be a best seller in the United States. I shall never forget an utterly one-sided conversation I had with a lady I met at a social gathering at the house of a political leader. For twenty good minutes, never hesitating for a word, a date, a title, or a name, she talked about my Russian, English, Danish, German, and Spanish relatives. She told me more about them than I had ever known myself. She was equally strong on the subject of the First Crusade and the present French descendants of its participants, and she had followed at close range the

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fate of each and every aide of William the Conqueror. When she finally tackled the passenger list of the good ship *Mayflower*, I became slightly alarmed. I felt as though her staccato narrative was succeeding in bridging the gulf of centuries and was putting me face to face with the gloomy and hungry squires who landed on that memorable last Thursday in November.

The possessor of all this astounding knowledge lived in a small up-state town, and considering the purely local ambitions of her hard-working husband, I seriously doubt whether she had ever had any occasion to use it for the least practical purpose. Hers was a classical case of "follow the leader." She made me realize for the first time that my American friends were getting more and more "royal," while I myself was becoming more and more "democratic." Ambiguous as these two adjectives are, I can think of no better way to express my amazement at the present mentality of American Society. It may have been merely snobbish in the days of the Manhattan "400," but by now it resembles the Austrian Imperial Court. It would require no lesser expert than the late High Chamberlain of the Hapsburgs to appreciate that incredibly complicated Law of American Social Priority which puts a premium on Boston, looks askance at New York, and makes a wry face at a midwestern city.

I openly confess my inability to understand the nature of the mysterious connection between the geographical

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location of the city a man lives in and the batting average credited to him by the Big League of American Society. I only know that each time I returned to New York from Dayton, Ohio; Springfield, Illinois; South Bend, Indiana; or from any other place west of the Hudson River, I was sure to hear this or that Manhattan hostess exclaim in tones of genuine sorrow: "How dreadful! How perfectly dreadful! You must have met some awful people."

I did my best to deny this contention. With the greatest enthusiasm I talked of many pleasant evenings spent in the hospitable homes of the hinterland, but I was invariably confronted with a sweet, slightly ironical smile which always meant that, while my compliment had been appreciated, my sincerity was being questioned.

Thus in the days of the Kings of France one remained nobody unless one moved to Paris and settled within walking distance of the Royal Palace, and thus it is taken for gospel truth on the Island of Corsica that only a thoroughly bad Corsican would choose to stay where he was born instead of following the example of Bonaparte.

By the time a stranger in America succeeds in memorizing his lessons in social geography, another fine problem appears on the horizon: a few weeks' stay in Boston, Philadelphia, or New York discloses the existence of innumerable distinctions between different prominent social sets within the limits of the same community. The following

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characteristic dialogue took place on many occasions during my sojourn in the East:

"Would you dine with us Thursday?"

"I am sorry, I have already accepted the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. X."

"You have accepted the invitation of whom?"

I was obliged to repeat the name, though it is well known to every American.

"I have never heard of them. Who are they?"

"Well, all I know of them is that Mr. X's father was chiefly responsible for the construction of one of the greatest western railroads. I believe this achievement of his completed the building of your country; at least I am certain that it was described to me as such by my teachers some fifty years ago. I wouldn't vouch, however, for the identity of the vessel that brought his forebears to America. For all I know they might have swum across the Atlantic."

"I have never heard of them, I am sure," repeated the stubborn lady, and then we both laughed. It happened that Mr. and Mrs. X belonged to a different social set.

History tells us that an illustrious English lord expressed great annoyance at so much talk about Mr. Newton. After all, who was that man Newton? His Lordship felt quite positive of never having met him at the court of Their Majesties.

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3

Like all lecturers, I was proud of my fan mail. Its bulk was provided by autograph seekers and cranks. The former can be found in England and in Germany, but the latter exist nowhere outside the United States.

Demands for money varied and so did threats. I was asked all kinds of sums, as high as one hundred thousand dollars—which I was supposed to deposit in a mail-box in San Bernardino, California—and as low as one half of my share “of the Romanoffs’ millions in the Bank of England” which I promptly mailed to Mr. TBC, General Delivery, Seattle, Washington. I hope the gentleman succeeded in collecting it. I did exactly as I was ordered: made a draft payable to the order of “cash” on the Bank of England, Threadneedle Street, London, for a sum of “fifty percent of Grand Duke Alexander’s share of the Romanoffs’ millions.”

More original were the threats. Mere shooting never satisfied my correspondents. A Chicago “friend of Soviet Russia” was going to blow up the Drake Hotel. A Montreal champion “of the national minorities in the Balkans” accused me of doing propaganda work for King Alexander of Yugoslavia; my morning coffee was to contain “enough germs to start an epidemic of typhoid fever.” A Palm Beach “enemy of all parasites” was prepared to demonstrate

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the efficiency of his secret invention, "the death-dealing rays," by destroying my apartment at the Everglades from a distance of ten miles. Then there was that "honest Russian of Harlem" who never failed to greet my arrival in New York with a message which read: "No Grover Whalen would be able to protect you against the ire of the working class." The retirement of Mr. Whalen made no impression on him. He flatly refused to use Mr. Mulrooney's name.

Toward the end of my third winter of lecturing I had my favorites among cranks. I came to know their handwriting and stationery. I thought I had learned all there was to be learned about that ever-growing group of the American population. It remained, however, for the chairman of a celebrated New York bank to introduce me to the queerest human in the United States. He came with a "proposition." He was going to build a "temple" for me. I was to be paid nearly a million dollars for a series of two hundred lectures spread over a period of four years. The choice of the topics and the length of lectures were to be determined by myself. No admission price was to be charged, no collections made.

"Are you so impressed by my books?" I asked him.

"Never read them," was his frank answer.

"Are you a spiritualist?"

"Decidedly not. I think it's so much bunk."

"Then what made you come here?"

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"It's like this," he said confidentially, moving closer. "I have discovered the origin of wars and revolutions. It's the food we eat."

"The food?"

"Exactly. Meat. Poultry. Fish. That's what makes us act like animals."

"I see. You are a vegetarian."

"I am and I want everybody to be like me. Six months on a strict diet of vegetables and you won't recognize this world. There is no other way of bringing about Eternal Peace."

"Are you promoting any particular brand of vegetables?"

He frowned.

"You don't seem to understand me," he said. "I am promoting nothing but Eternal Peace. Mine is not a commercial proposition. I simply want you to announce at the end of each one of your sermons that you accredit your miraculous escape from all dangers to the fact that you never tasted meat and always lived on vegetables."

"What makes you think that it would impress people?"

"I know it would."

When he left, I reread the letter of introduction given to him by my banker-friend. It said: "Mr. — is a valuable client of ours. I am willing to vouch for his integrity and guarantee any proposition he makes to you."

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4

My lecture tour completed, I went to Washington to keep an appointment with my own past in the house of Mrs. H where I often dined in the summer of 1893. A woman in her late eighties, my hostess had been brought up in the school of depressions. She was the only American I had ever met who remembered anything that happened more than six months before. To watch her read newspapers was sheer delight.

"The hottest May twenty-fifth in the history of the United States," she would mutter, glancing at the headlines. "Stuff and nonsense. They know damn well that it's not true. Why, I myself remember at least twenty summers when it was much hotter on May twenty-fifth. 'Three victims of heat.' Three victims, indeed. . . . One was probably run over by a truck while the other two died from bad liquor. Why blame it on the weather? 'The most crucial moment in the history of the United States, says Secretary of the Treasury.' Well, you couldn't expect him to remember anything, could you? How about eighteen-seventy-three when almost every savings bank and every railroad went into bankruptcy? 'The coming elections will be remembered by generations to come, says the nominee.' That's what every nominee has said since the day that fellow Grant defeated General Robert E. Lee.

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Why, in four years from today no American living will remember the name of the defeated candidate. . . . Sometimes I am glad I am a resident of Washington and can't vote for any one of them. What this country needs is a law disfranchising ninety-nine percent of its inhabitants."

"And the remaining one percent? Who are they?"

"Oh, the professional politicians. The ward-healers and the county dog-catchers. They run this country anyway. Why bother the boobs at all?"

She would say all of this, not in the manner of a gray-haired bore who constantly cries over the Good Old Days but in the vigorous tones of a clear-thinking human being who refuses to be impressed by the rattle and the hysteria of the American bandwagon. The very expression "Good Old Days" was banned in the house of Mrs. H.

"Stop lying," she would interrupt anyone who tried to glorify the past at the expense of the present. "Things were never better or worse than they are now. Same grafting, same love-making, same drinking, same ignorance, same jokes. Nothing has changed, except that our granddaughters are less hypocritical and less vicious than we were."

On the night I dined in her house in the spring of 1930 there was a grave discussion at the table. Several gentlemen present, New York bankers and United States Senators, were trying to determine what object lesson, if any,

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Americans would derive from the great depression of the 1930's.

"They will realize that the strength of our country lies in our strict adherence to the gold standard," said a famous banker.

"They will finally open their eyes on the existing interdependence of the nations of the world," said an editorial writer revered as a major prophet of the United States by his countrymen.

"They will come out of this depression better citizens and greater respecters of our Constitution," said a ruddy-cheeked Senator.

"They will forget in less than twenty years that there ever has been a depression in the nineteen-thirties," said Mrs. H. "Long before nineteen-forty is here you fellows will be unloading again all the trash that can be gathered in Central Europe and South America . . ."

She nodded at the trio of New York bankers, who laughed respectfully but none too gayly.

When it was my turn to speak, I asked to be excused. I did not want to lie in the presence of Mrs. H and I feared that were I to speak frankly I would be misunderstood by my listeners. Some of them were self-made men, conscious of their success and extremely proud of their humble beginnings. They would have resented my ideas, possibly would have taken them as a personal insult.

"Speak up," said Mrs. H, "you know something about

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débâcles and storms. Give us the European point of view."

"I'd rather wait, if you don't mind."

"Wait for what?"

"For further demonstrations of the correctness of my theory."

5

I have waited now for three years, clipping newspaper items dealing with bankruptcies and gathering data on the heads of the defunct institutions. And while it would naturally take a better equipped statistician than myself to present a complete report, what I have in my possession is sufficiently impressive. My theory is simple, just as simple as that only lesson which has been provided by the American Depression so far: Thou shalt not make an idol out of a self-made man!

My clippings tell me that more than ninety percent of banks that failed and factories that shut their doors were founded or headed by self-made men. Not only in the United States but in Europe as well. Hatry in England, Kreuger in Sweden and Osterick in France—these three spectacular bankrupts of the Old World belonged to that selfsame group of miraculous self-made men who are revered as half-gods in the United States. And the worst stricken major industry of America happens to be the motion picture industry, an industry that owes its origin to the efforts of Polish and Central European immigrants.

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I need not quote names or provide charts. Anyone who reads the newspapers knows that whenever there occurred a "spectacular" bankruptcy in the last four years, the heads of the institution that failed turned out to be men not prepared by their upbringing or professional education for the positions they came to occupy.

Irritating as it is to most Americans, there is, always has been and always will be such a thing as "tradition." The Rothschilds and the Mendelssohns are what they are not because there is so much gold in their coffers, but because they were born in an atmosphere permeated with banking tradition. The founders of their Houses may have been self-made men, but, in the first place, they lived in the beginning of the nineteenth century when the industrial world was still young and, in the second place, none of them had built a fortune overnight. It took them nearly a century to become "the" Rothschilds and "the" Mendelssohns although even the least talented of them knew much more about banking than do the miracle-bankers of the United States.

This sounds like a page out of the First Reader: a baker bakes bread, a shoemaker makes shoes. And so it is. Had the Americans of the 1920's been guided by the wisdom of the First Reader, there would be less suffering in the United States today. No one, not even the selfsame press agents who have made "national figures" out of loud-voiced mediocrities and solemn bores can provide a plausible ex-

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planation of the fact that a nation which always insisted that only "specialists" be permitted to prescribe castor oil for a stomach ache has allowed tailors, shepherds and furriers to head its banking institutions.

I am talking of banks and bankers, both because no other industry in America has been conducted in a more haphazard fashion and because the glorification of self-made men is the only commandment respected by Wall Street.

"There are no bankers in America, only salesmen," said Witte, Russian Minister of Finance, in 1893. Coming from a self-made man who began his life as a railroad clerk, it sounded bewildering. It took me nearly forty years to realize the real meaning of his remark. But then it took America nearly four years of suffering, hunger and heart-break to say that politics should be run by politicians.



CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RECAPTURE

I

It is long past the cocktail-hour and the sad-eyed violinist is wiping heavy drops of perspiration from his brow. He has fought since early afternoon with the sunlit stillness of this deserted café and he is about to give in.

I sit and listen. I am back in Europe, in Monte Carlo. My brandy is marked "Napoleon" and the name of the song played by the orchestra is "Gay Paris." No restaurant can afford to serve Napoleon brandy and Paris was never gay, but I have just returned from America and I do not mind cheerful lies.

"I am telling you that the only thing to do is to scrape together what little money we still have and go to Tahiti. This depression is getting on my nerves. I can't stand it any longer."

The man at the adjoining table must be an optimist. Or possibly he has read too many Cook's pamphlets. I personally can do without Tahiti. I intend to stay right where I am, on the French Riviera. It is curious that I should wind up by settling where my father and my sister died, but I

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think of them without sorrow. I am supremely happy. I have attained my goal. The recapture. It may not have come in the way I expected but it is comforting that after a life the like of which few men have lived I still can see that all of it, every bit of it, was beautiful. Had I been shot in 1918 I would have died regretting lots of things. Now I regret nothing. "Do your job and do it well." I never had a job and whatever I did was done badly, but America cured me of the self-consciousness of the dilettante. I saw the Great Efficient Men at the moment of a grave crisis and I am glad to be a dilettante. Somehow it has kept me from being contaminated by their hysteria. Thanks to America I have discovered also why the Bourbons "learn nothing." Because they could never find anything worth learning, anything that they had not tried. Because, not unlike me, they had never in the course of their exile encountered anyone who really and truly knew his job.

"Let everyone sweep in front of his own door and the entire world will be clean." As a doctrine of untamed individualism, these words of the dying Goethe are quite impressive but as practical advice they fail to measure up to the requirements of the living. How does one go about sweeping in front of one's door? By locking the conventions in or by dusting them out? I have tried both and I have found that the world looks its gloomiest when swept clean. The World War set us all scrubbing in front of our

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respective doors and so has the depression. And yet . . .

The violinist is getting desperate. He motions to the orchestra to stop and plays a solo, "Quand l'amour meurt." When I first heard that song, Mussolini was in his cradle while Hitler had not been born. Men of Action. Men of Destiny. Men of the Hour. A passage from the diary of Emperor Alexander I comes to my mind: "Tilsit. 1807. Spent the whole afternoon with Napoleon. I can forgive him all but the fact that he is such a frightful liar. How can I trust him?" Can anyone trust a Man of Destiny?

"Quand l'amour meurt . . ." The violinist must have his own sentimental reasons for playing that silly old song again. What was the exact year when I heard it first? I listen to the music for a while and then I recall. 1889. Paris. "The" Bar Américain. Just about the time I met Archduke Johann Nepomuk Salvator who preferred to be addressed by his assumed name of "Mr. John Orth" and who quite unconsciously kept me from burning my bridges.

2

When I met John Orth in a hotel in Paris his marriage to Milly Stubel, the fifteen-year-old Austrian dancer, was providing the main topic of gossip to all the idle courtiers of Europe. The world was still young—it happened in the 1880's. No American aviators were crossing the Atlantic; no Hitlers were becoming heads of governments, and all

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that an Archduke had to do to become a front page sensation was to spot out a pretty girl during a military parade in the small Austrian city of Linz, stop his horse in front of her, lift her in his arms and drive to a nearby church.

Had a thing of this caliber happened to any other man, it is certain that the marriage would have been dissolved, the parents of Milly Stubel given a handsome settlement and the whole incident forgotten a week later. But my friend was a Hapsburg, and so was his uncle the Emperor Franz Joseph. Decorative as were their respective whiskers, they failed to disguise the protruding jaw of the House of Hapsburg, the sign of the world's prize stubbornness and conceit.

The Archduke suspected that he had acted foolishly, but hated to hear people yell at him. The Emperor had been young once himself, but he could not permit anyone, not even his nephew, to talk back to him. It wound up in a general row.

He who was Archduke Johann Nepomuk Salvator became Mr. John Orth, a gentleman expelled from Austria, cut off without a cent and closely followed by the secret service men of the enraged Emperor. He had to move fast: for all he knew the Austrian detectives might try to kidnap Milly Stubel. And so he went from Austria to Switzerland, from Switzerland to Spain, from Spain to England, from England to France. Once in a while, tired of this constant pursuit, he would stage an innocent deceit: would walk

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out of a hotel leaving his baggage behind, meet Milly outside, move to a nearby town and mail letters to friends in the other end of the world, in Patagonia or South Africa, to have these letters remailed to Vienna.

The reporters said he was the mystery man of Europe. His uncle thought he was the blackest spot on the escutcheon of the Hapsburgs.

Some mutual friends in Paris promised to arrange my meeting with John Orth, and my anticipation was keen. I was approaching the age when, in accordance with the traditions of the Russian royal family, a young Grand Duke was expected to marry a German Grand Duchess whom he had never seen before and who might prove to be the most repulsive girl on earth. It was cheerful to think that there existed royalty of Johann Nepomuk's daring, and that, should the worst come to the worst, I could imitate his example. . . .

He came in accompanied by a young girl. No introduction was necessary to know that she was the famous Milly Stubel: her frightened eyes and haggard face told the story of their wanderings. At once he said that he wanted to ask me to do him a favor. I thought he meant money, but he explained that it was to be a more important favor. Would I consent to talk on his behalf to the Emperor Franz Joseph while visiting Vienna the following month? This puzzled me. Why I, of all people?—a youngster seeing the Austrian Emperor for the first time in his life.

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"It seems to me," I said, "that it would be much better if the pleading were done by one of your brothers or cousins."

He shook his head.

"They all hate me," he said curtly. "I am asking you to do it just because the old man has never seen you and especially because of your youth. In his heart the Emperor is not bad. It may soften him that a young Russian Grand Duke is pleading for another young man. Tell him that we are supremely happy. Tell him that all we are asking of him is to permit me to receive a small part of the income from my estates. I am not asking to be reinstated in my title and I do not want to go back to Austria. A bit of money, now and then, is all that I and my wife need. Isn't it so, Milly? Aren't we happy to have each other?"

She nodded but remained silent. The poor thing obviously did not believe that anyone could "soften" the stone-willed Emperor.

We chatted for a while and then they got up.

"If the news is good," said John Nepomuk, "will you please notify me at this address? If not, do not bother to write. I shall understand what your silence means."

The address written on the back of his visiting card read: "Mr. John Orth, c/o Hotel Bauer au Lac, Zurich, Switzerland."

I never saw the hapless couple again, but I did write them of the results of my intervention in Vienna. Unfor-

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tunately, it took less than half a dozen lines. No sooner did I broach the fatal subject to the Emperor than he lowered his watery eyes, which only a moment before had been permeated with kindness, and said in a muffled voice: "It is not my habit to solicit anyone's assistance in solving the problems of my family. I do hope that His Imperial Highness will enjoy his stay in Vienna."

No one has ever learned the exact circumstances or the country of John Orth's death. His last letter received by his friends in Paris was dated "Chatham, England, March 26, 1891," and advised them of his intention to sail for South America. Supposedly he died in Argentina a year later, at the age of thirty-nine. Not less than a score of impostors have appeared within the last fifteen years in the two Americas, using John Orth's name and threatening to sue the Hapsburg estate. Discovery that there was no such thing as a "Hapsburg estate," all of it having been swallowed by the inflation in Austria, usually sent the enterprising old gentlemen back to more profitable ways of cheating. If Milly Stubel is alive today she must be sixty. I hope, for her sake, that her second husband is a commoner.

3

A whole quarter of a century passed before I again faced an Emperor to plead for the fate of a young man in love. In the case of John Orth I was prompted by a purely

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egotistical motive: I was thinking of myself and my own future. But now, in the study of Czar Nicholas II, I spoke with the eloquence of a worried father. My own sons were rapidly growing up and I felt that unless I succeeded in breaking that wall of prejudice there would be trouble and heartbreak and tragedy in my family. The circumstances seemed favorable: the Czar had to deal with two other culprits at the same time. The elder was his uncle, the younger was his own brother. Both were handsome and beloved by everybody. Both, with an interval of ten years, had married divorced commoners. Both had been forced to leave Russia.

"Things have come to a pretty pass," said the Czar nervously, "when my Uncle Paul dares to marry the divorced wife of one of my officers and my brother Misha goes his uncle one better and picks for his consort a twice divorced daughter of a radical Moscow lawyer. A double breach of etiquette in the case of Paul and a triple breach in the case of Misha!"

What he meant by "double" and "triple" breaches was that not only was a Grand Duke not supposed to marry a commoner, but no divorced woman was ever permitted to appear in the presence of Their Majesties.

"My conscience is clear," he added as an after-thought. "I did everything to stop Misha from taking that reckless step."

I had to suppress a smile. Not only had the Czar done

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his level best to interfere with his brother's marriage in Russia but every Russian Ambassador abroad had been mobilized, every European chancellery notified and a squad of secret service men dispatched to shadow the fugitive couple, with the result that the story of Misha's wedding reads like a detective thriller.

The employees of a small German railroad station could hardly have dreamed that the very tall young man and his thickly veiled woman companion who jumped off the Paris express in the early hours of a winter morning were the brother of the Czar of All the Russias and his future consort. It was not until the train reached the French capital that the three Russian secret operators, picked because of their experience and vigilance, discovered that their august prey had escaped them. Then they rushed to Cannes, on the French Riviera: the night before they had read with their own eyes the telegram dispatched by the Grand Duke from Berlin, which requested the management of a hotel in Cannes to reserve a "comfortable suite for two." They thought that sooner or later the Grand Duke was bound to show up there.

Notified of the newest developments, the Russian Ambassador in France got in touch with the Minister of the Interior and the latter was only too glad to oblige the Czar. "Fear not, my dear colleague," he reassured the Ambassador. "No French justice of the peace and no mayor would dare to disobey my orders." That was that, and St.

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Petersburg Society prepared for the home-coming of the prodigal Grand Duke—it looked as if, having failed to secure a marriage license in Germany and France, he would have to return and beg the forgiveness of his Imperial brother.

The chief of the secret service received monarchical thanks for the efficiency of his men, and for a whole week all was peace in the Czar's palace. Then a disturbing wire arrived from the Russian Ambassador in Vienna: a man by the name of Michael Romanoff had been married to a woman by the name of Natalia Sheremetievsky in a small Austrian town just a week ago. . . . So certain was the Czar that his brother would never think of invading the country of the very strict Hapsburgs that the Austrian Government was the only one whose "friendly" assistance had not been solicited by the Russian Court!

The irritation of the Czar may well be imagined. Disobeyed and ridiculed, he was in no mood to listen to my plea for tolerance and forgiveness.

"You are wasting your time," he said to me. "If I fail to discipline my own uncle and brother, then what right have I got to expect the outsiders to obey me?"

"Quite so, Nicky," I agreed with as much enthusiasm as I could muster under the circumstances. "But let me remind you of something that we both witnessed as children. Do you recall that night in the Winter Palace when we sat at the dinner table of your grandfather and watched our

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relatives snub the poor Princess Dolgorouky? Weren't you sorry for her? Weren't you in sympathy with your grandfather?"

"Of course I was," he exclaimed impatiently, "but I was only thirteen then, and naturally no boy of that age can appreciate the wisdom of a rigid dynastic rule."

"Is there wisdom, Nicky, in trying to separate two people who love each other? Is there wisdom in forcing your brother to quit a woman with whom he is happy and marry someone he does not care for?"

"Words, words, words," he said, with a wave of the hand. "We Royalty must think of our task, not of our personal desires and fancies. It is all very well for you to heap abuse on our system of marriages, but this is the only system that preserves our children from inheriting the traits of the commoner."

"And what are those awful traits, Nicky?" I asked quietly, trying not to sound unduly ironical.

He gave me a sharp glance.

"Just two," he said severely. "The quest of personal happiness. The desire to enjoy life. No sovereign may be happy. No sovereign may enjoy life. If he does"—he shrugged his shoulders, waited a moment and added, looking his gloomiest—"then nothing is left of what we call Royalty!"

"I see," I said. "You must be a confirmed believer in the law of heredity. But then, Nicky, how do you explain that

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neither your brother Misha nor your Uncle Paul has inherited that very laudable determination to be unhappy? God knows, there are no commoners in their family tree."

"I do not have to explain it," he returned dryly. "My duty is to see that they are properly punished."

And punished they were. Not until the outbreak of the World War had made all the sacred rules seem insignificant and puerile were the two Grand Dukes permitted to return to Russia. Even then, though put in command of fighting units of the army, they remained estranged from the Czar, and their wives were never treated as equals by the members of the Imperial Family. Across the letter of Grand Duke Paul, who asked for his morganatic consort the rather modest privilege of being placed ahead of the general aides-de-camp during official receptions, the Czar wrote in blue pencil: "What arrant nonsense!"

4

The violinist has stopped playing. Everybody has left. I am alone. I am annoyed with myself for thinking about things that belong to a far past. John Orth. Misha. Nicky. What "arrant nonsense," indeed . . . All of them are gone. Very soon I myself will have to go. I have seen so many wars that I have lost the ability to distinguish between "heroism" and "cowardice." He who tries to be someone else instead of walking through doors that are

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open, is he a hero or a coward? I don't know, I am sure. I do know, however, that the greatest thrills and the most gratifying adventures of my life seemed so much grind, so much misery, at the time they happened.

If I get up now and walk down the street toward the railway embankment, I shall think, no doubt, of the many others who are dead, whom I used to see off or meet at the station of Monte Carlo. My father. My brothers. My sister. King Edward. I envied them when they were alive. I pity them now. They were never given a chance to taste what I had tasted and to see themselves from a distance. They died regretting that they had not been born in different families, under different circumstances. They did not live long enough to understand that there is no such thing as "personal happiness," that it is only the dream about Solveig that is worth an effort, not Solveig herself.

It is getting late. The motor-cars squatting in front of the Casino are switching on their lights. Some friends are awaiting me in the roulette hall but I am tired of the past and I dread to come face to face with the ghosts of the Casino. They are nasty, second-rate ghosts. They talk in accents of impotent hatred and petty greed. They must have been politicians in one of their earlier incarnations. They should have been buried long ago.

I am going home. I have one, for the first time in sixty-seven years. Not much of a home—just big enough for me and my future.

A BOOK CHAT WITH THE EDITOR

READING a book is to me rather like exploring a new world. I start for a destination—and no sooner do I reach it than I want to press on to the next. That unknown something around the corner always seems to hold possibilities even more fascinating than my present discovery. Thus, no sooner do we publish a book than we find ourselves wondering about the next one.

Perhaps you feel the same way. Perhaps you are always pressing on, blindly at times to be sure, to meet new people, to see new places, to gain new knowledge—and if this is true, you may welcome my suggestions on what might best be your next adventure in the realm of books—and after all to meet a great personality—to see a new country, to learn a new fact, is an adventure.

Before we start, however, let me set the stage. I am the guide. Your bookseller is the ticket office, the books we talk about are the trips you can take, or the people you can meet.

* * * * *

I met J. Pierpont Morgan in *MORGAN THE MAGNIFICENT*, by John K. Winkler—and for the first time I saw him as a man—not a powerful myth, hidden in a castle of stone in the dark canyon of Wall Street.

The passing of years has at length enabled us to obtain a true perspective upon J. Pierpont Morgan, founder of the strongest financial dynasty the world knows today. Not in wealth but in power, the House of Morgan is without a rival; compared with

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it, the Rockefellers, Rothschilds, and Krupps are mere pigmies. Yet this vast structure, which rules financial America and through this power dominates the money markets of the world, is essentially the creation of one man. It is not too strong a statement to say that even today, from his grave, J. Pierpont Morgan controls, through American dollars, the entire world.

It has remained for John K. Winkler, biographer of Andrew Carnegie, to reveal in lively, intimate, and authoritative fashion, the true Morgan. We behold in this book not merely the financial overlord with an uneasy itch for power, but the creator of a new industrial day in America, the patron of art, the imperious monarch who in manners and morals was a law unto himself. Like some of the fabled kings of the Old Testament, he was eclectic in his choice of mistresses. He collected beautiful women as he collected objects of art. Vying in interest with Morgan himself are the other important figures that move through these pages: James J. Hill, E. H. Harriman, Jacob Schiff, Andrew Carnegie, Charles M. Schwab and many others...

Once in a hundred years is born a man like Morgan. One in a thousand has the art of Winkler. If you will read even the first ten pages you will share my enthusiasm.

And when you have read MORGAN THE MAGNIFICENT you will want to read John K. Winkler's INCREDIBLE CARNEGIE, the great story of a Scotchman who gave away \$350,695,653.40 in a life time. *It also is a Star Book.*

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